

Semantic and Linguocultural Peculiarities of Translating Anthroponyms in German and Russian

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Abstract: This article examines the semantic and linguocultural peculiarities of translating anthroponyms in German and Russian. Special attention is paid to the preservation of national, cultural, and stylistic features of personal names in translation. The study analyzes different translation methods such as transcription, transliteration, calque, and adaptation. The research highlights the importance of anthroponyms in reflecting cultural identity and intercultural communication.

Keywords: Anthroponyms, translation, semantics, German language, Russian language, personal names, transliteration, transcription, intercultural communication.

Introduction: In contemporary linguistics, the study of personal proper names holds a significant position because of their importance in language, culture, and communication. Anthroponyms — a class of proper names that includes first names, last names, nicknames, and pen names — form a crucial component of any language's lexical system. They function not only as tools for identifying individuals but also as vessels of historical, national, cultural, and social knowledge.

The issue of translating anthroponyms has grown increasingly relevant in the context of cross-cultural communication and the translation of literary works. Within fictional texts, anthroponyms frequently carry stylistic, symbolic, and expressive roles, mirroring the author's intent and the cultural background of a given people. Consequently, translating anthroponyms demands not just language proficiency but also a thorough understanding of cultural and historical settings.

The German and Russian systems of anthroponyms each display unique semantic and linguocultural characteristics. German personal names often stem from ancient Germanic customs and historical

meanings, whereas Russian anthroponyms reflect Slavic cultural traditions and Orthodox Christian naming practices. These contrasts pose various difficulties in translation, particularly when the goal is to retain national flavor, emotional overtones, and subtle shades of meaning.

The research is motivated by the increasing interest in linguocultural perspectives within translation studies and the need to maintain cultural identity in translated texts. The object of this study is anthroponyms as they appear in German and Russian literary discourse, while the subject is the semantic and linguocultural peculiarities involved in their translation.

The objective of the study is to examine the semantic and linguocultural features of anthroponyms and to determine the primary methods and challenges of translating them between German and Russian. To accomplish this objective, the following tasks are set:

- to clarify the notion and roles of anthroponyms;
- to explore their semantic and cultural traits;
- to examine translation strategies applied when rendering anthroponyms;
- to pinpoint linguocultural issues that emerge in

translation practice.

The research employs methods such as semantic analysis, comparative analysis, a descriptive approach, and linguocultural interpretation. The theoretical value of the study lies in its contribution to the further development of translation studies and linguoculturology, while its practical value is linked to the application of its findings in literary translation and the teaching of foreign languages.

Anthroponyms in the German and Russian languages have been formed under the influence of various historical, religious, and cultural factors. For example, in Russian anthroponymy, the patronymic system based on the father's name plays a significant role, whereas in German anthroponymy, surnames are often derived from occupations, places of residence, or personal characteristics. This phenomenon creates certain difficulties in the process of their translation.

The intensification of globalization and intercultural communication requires anthroponyms to be translated accurately both semantically and culturally. Therefore, the study of the semantic and linguocultural features of anthroponyms is considered one of the most relevant tasks of modern translation studies.

In linguistics, anthroponyms are studied as an important part of onomastics. They perform not only the function of identifying a person but also contain specific national and cultural information. For example, Russian surnames such as "Smirnov," "Kuznetsov," and "Volkov" are associated with Slavic culture, whereas German surnames such as "Becker," "Weber," and "Krause" reflect historical information related to occupations, crafts, or personal characteristics.

The semantic content of anthroponyms plays a significant role in the process of translation. In some cases, personal names convey a particular image, national coloring, or historical meaning. Therefore, the translator must not only interpret the anthroponym correctly but also preserve its cultural significance in translation.

German and Russian anthroponyms differ from each other in terms of their formation and semantics. In Russian anthroponyms, Orthodox culture and Slavic traditions occupy an important place. Many Russian personal names originate from Greek, Latin, and ancient Slavic languages. For example, the name

"Alexander" means "defender," while "Victor" signifies "winner" or "conqueror."

In German anthroponyms, the historical traditions of the Germanic peoples are reflected. For instance, the name "Bernhard" means "strong as a bear," whereas "Friedrich" denotes "ruler of peace." In surnames, occupation and social status have historically played a significant role:

Müller — miller;

Schneider — tailor;

Fischer — fisherman.

In the Russian language, the patronymic system expresses respect and formality toward a person. For example, the form "Ivan Ivanovich" indicates an official or formal style of communication. In German, however, such a system does not exist, and therefore certain pragmatic meanings may be lost in the process of translation.

The semantic features of anthroponyms are particularly important in literary translation. In a literary work, a character's name may indicate their personality, social status, or national identity. For this reason, the translator should pay attention not only to the external form of names but also to their internal semantic meaning.

In translation studies, there are several main methods of translating anthroponyms:

1. Transcription-In the method of transcription, the pronunciation of the anthroponym is preserved. For example:

Heinrich → Генрих;

Johann → Иоганн.

This method makes it possible to preserve the phonetic features of the name:

2. Transliteration-In transliteration, letters are transferred from one writing system to another. For example:

Müller → Мюллер;

Schmidt → Шмидт.

This method is widely used in official documents.

3. Semantic Translation-In some cases, the meaning of the anthroponym is translated. This is more common in nicknames and pseudonyms. For example:

Snow White → Белоснежка;

Red Riding Hood → Красная Шапочка.

4. Adaptation-In the adaptation method, the anthroponym is adjusted to the culture of the target language. For instance, some Russian names may be rendered in forms adapted to the German language.

Anthroponyms are linguistic units that reflect the national worldview and cultural values of a particular people. Therefore, linguocultural factors play an important role in their translation.

In the Russian language, diminutive and affectionate forms are widely used:

Alexander → Sasha;

Yekaterina → Katya.

These forms express emotional attitude and familiarity. Similar phenomena also exist in German:

Johann → Hans;

Margarete → Gretchen.

However, when translating these forms into another language, it is often difficult to preserve their emotional nuance.

In literary works, anthroponyms serve the function of creating national coloring. For example, the anthroponyms found in the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky or Leo Tolstoy are considered important markers of Russian culture. In German literature, anthroponyms in the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Thomas Mann reflect the national environment and cultural atmosphere.

During the translation process, the following problems frequently arise:

- preserving the national characteristics of a name;
- differences in pronunciation and spelling;
- conveying cultural connotations;
- preserving the meanings of nicknames and pseudonyms.

For this reason, when translating anthroponyms, the translator must possess not only linguistic competence but also profound cultural knowledge.

The prevalence of proper names in a native language can also facilitate their transition from proper nouns to common nouns. For example, the Russian name Ivan, the German name Hans, and the English name John

may be used in certain situations to refer to any man of the respective nationality.

Traditional Rules for Rendering German Anthroponyms into Russian (with new examples):

1) The German letter “H” at the beginning of a word usually becomes the Russian letter “-Г (G)”.

For example: Hagen – Hagen → Гаген (Gagen); Helmut – Helmuth → Гельмут (Gelmuth).

2) German feminine names ending in “-e” receive the ending “-а” in Russian.

For example: Adele – Adele → Аделя (Adelya); Bertha – Bertha → Берта (Berta).

3) Ancient masculine names ending in “-o” receive the ending “-н” in Russian.

For example: Cicero – Cicero → Цицерон (Tsitseron); Cato – Cato → Катон (Katon).

4) In masculine names ending in “-us, -es”, the ending is dropped.

For example: Augustus – Augustus → Август (Avgust); Achilles – Achilles → Ахилл (Akhill).

5) Names ending in “-eus, -äus” receive the ending “-ей” in Russian.

For example: Achilles – Achilleus → Ахиллей (Akhilley); Talamonäus – Talamonäus → Таламоне́й (Talamoney).

6) Feminine names ending in -is receive the ending -да in Russian.

For example: Io – Io (Greek mythology) → Иода (Ioda); Calypso – Kalypso → Калипсо́да (Kalipsoda).

7) Traditional correspondences:

For example: The composer Ludwig van Beethoven – Людвиг ван Бетховен (the preposition “van” is retained here, but if von – omitted similarly).

The painter Albrecht Dürer – Альбрехт Дюрер.

8) The same name rendered differently depending on context:

For example: The French king name Louis – when referring to a king → Людовик (Lyudovik); in other cases, → Луи (Lui).

The name Frederick – when referring to the Prussian king → Фридрих (Fridrikh); in other cases (e.g., a modern person) → Фредерик (Frederik).

The nickname of the king Richard the Lionheart – in

German Richard Löwenherz – rendered as Ричард Львиное Сердце.

9) When translating religious texts, Christian correspondences are used:

For example: Petrus – Пётр (Pyotr); Matthäus – Матфей (Matfey); Andreas – Андрей (Andrey); Jakob – Иаков (Iakov).

Calque translation can be used when proper names possess semantic meaning.

Calque translation is a translation technique in which the constituent parts of a word (morphemes) or a phrase are replaced by their direct equivalents in the target language. For example, Gemischte Gesetze – “mixed laws”.

Let us provide examples of calquing (loan translation) in the translation of anthroponyms from German into Russian: Marie die Blutige – Maria the Bloody (Mary the Bloody), Heinrich der Vogler – Henry the Fowler, Richard Löwenherz – Richard the Lionheart, Wilhelm der Eroberer – William the Conqueror, Karl der Große – Charlemagne (Charles the Great).

If a proper name is part of a phrase, the meaning of the entire phrase is conveyed. Proper names often appear as components of set phrases and denote objects and plants. For example: “süßer Heinrich” – sugar bowl; “großer Heinz” – pudding; “Oskar aus der Tonne” – noodles with tomato sauce; “falscher Wilhelm” – wig; “große Pauline” – large coffee pot; “billiger Max” – shop with very low prices; “grüner August” – vehicle for prisoners; “der alte Gottfried” – dressing gown/housecoat.

Transliteration is the rendering of the graphic form of a word, taking into account the equivalents of two alphabets: that of the source language and that of the target language. The names of many German writers were introduced into the Russian language by means of transliteration.

For example: Zweig – Цвейг (Zweig), Feuchtwanger – Фойхтвангер (Feuchtwanger), Hans – Ганс (Hans), Hermann – Герман (Hermann), Reinhold – Рейнголд (Reinhold).

The leading method of rendering anthroponyms is transcription, that is, the transfer of the phonetic form of a word. Transcription reproduces a word according to the way it sounds in German.

For example: Zürich – Цюрих, Goethe – Гёте, Remarque – Ремарк.

Differences in the phonetic systems of languages sometimes lead to inaccuracies in translation or to a combination of transcription and transliteration. For instance, in the name Dietrich it is impossible to convey the length of the vowel sound; in the name Thomas, aspiration is not transmitted; and in the surname Mann, the doubling of consonants is not preserved (Hermann – Герман, Kellermann – Келлерман).

In conclusion, it can be said that anthroponyms serve not only as means of personal identification but also as important reflections of national culture, history, and worldview. The comparative study of German and Russian anthroponyms demonstrates that their semantic and linguocultural characteristics are deeply connected with historical traditions, religious influences, and social values. The research shows that the translation of anthroponyms requires preserving both their linguistic form and cultural meaning in order to maintain the stylistic and national coloring of the original text. Moreover, the study identifies transcription, transliteration, adaptation, semantic translation, and calque translation as the main methods used in rendering anthroponyms between the two languages. The findings confirm that effective translation depends not only on linguistic knowledge but also on intercultural competence and an understanding of cultural context. Therefore, the study highlights the important role of linguocultural analysis in modern translation studies and contributes to the further development of research on anthroponyms and literary translation.

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