

Cognitive Equivalence As a Criterion of the Precedent Name Translation

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Abstract. the article focuses on the relevance of cognitive equivalence for the translation of precedent names. The paper also considers the influence of the source and target culture specifics on the degree of cognitive equivalence the translator is able to establish depending on the disparity in the worldview of the author and the target reader. The translator's decisions aimed at achieving the highest level of cognitive equivalence are illustrated, and the incongruence, which may arise even when resorting to the same translation method in different contexts of the precedent name use, is presented.

Keywords: *cognitive equivalence, mental image, precedent name, source culture, target culture.*

Introduction. The latest developments of the Translation Studies are increasingly concerned with the cognitive aspect of the translation process which is of special relevance for rendering culture-specific units, including precedent names (PNs) as "value-based images of the world, social relationships, personal attitudes and moral priorities deeply rooted in the unconscious of a cultural community and characteristic of a particular social or historical stage in its development as well as possessing a stereotypic verbalization and easily decoded by the representatives of the above-mentioned community [3, p. 11]. Any PN, regardless of the culture it is inherent in, embodies the ideas held by the corresponding community as most essential and valuable. Therefore, the long-standing associations surrounding a PN allow for its retrieval from the memory with no difficulties.

However, the interpretation goes unhampered only for the members of the community where the appropriate name has achieved the level of precedence. Taking into account that PN formation is a non-homogeneous process depending on the axiological orientation of the community, its historical background, social standards, religious beliefs as well as a broad range of other factors, it is highly probable that a PN concealing a vast array of connotations for the intended audience will actualize no mental image in the mind of a person belonging to a different culture. Consequently, the PN will not be able to serve its communicative purpose actualizing no conceptual meaning which results in the loss of the affective evaluation and imagery of the original message. Therefore, linguistic correspondence is far from being sufficient for a PN to be appropriately interpreted by the target reader. Differences in the background knowledge leading to variations in the expression of the same meaning or even in the meanings peculiar to a specific culture pose a significant challenge for the translator. Eventually, he/she faces the need for complying with another criterion in his/her work, namely the achievement of cognitive equivalence.

Thus, the paper is **aimed** at the study of methods for reaching cognitive equivalence in the translation of PNs as a unique phenomenon standing on the border of language, culture and cognition.

Short review of the latest publications. Equivalence has constituted a major issue of translation throughout its history, even before the Translation Studies evolved into an independent discipline. Nevertheless, the understanding of the term has varied considerably depending on the dominant paradigm. Originally, equivalence referred to the highest correspondence of the source and target texts achieved at the linguistic level [5, p. 152-153]. Still, with the expansion of translation activities, new factors affecting the equivalence

degree emerged. A major step in developing the concept of equivalence was taken by E. Nida who shifted the focus from the form of the message to the response of the receptor [14, p. 1] which resulted in the theory of dynamic equivalence. Proceeding from the peculiarities of the Bible translation, E. Nida emphasized the importance of conditions under which the translation is carried out as well as the role of target audience whose response shall be equivalent to that of the source recipient as a representative of a different culture. Therefore, the communicative and functional aspects of equivalence are addressed leading to the need for considering the influence of cultural differences on the achievement of the translator's aims.

"The translator does not translate a text on the basis of the dictionary, but rather on the basis of the whole history of two literatures. Therefore, translating is not only connected with linguistic competence, but with intertextual, psychological, and narrative competence. Thus, the translator is forced at all times to go beyond linguistic competence to the cultural spectrum" [2, p. 14]. The cultural equivalence [1], unlike that established at the linguistic level, is of utmost significance for rendering the PNs as their meaning primarily derives from the history, traditions, religion, media, political and social life of a particular nation.

"Optimally, translation should be the rendition, via linguistic means, of the source language cultural, literary conventions and the totality of background facts to the target language culture" [7 *www*]. PNs represent a bridge between the preceding text and the current context revealing the features and axiological orientations that established the precedent. At the same time, the meaning of a PN is based not on the source of its origin as such but deeply rooted in the unconscious of a particular nation which possesses specific mental models determining interpretation of various verbal and non-verbal phenomena. Consequently, translation is aimed at retaining a similar cognitive effect on the original recipient and the translation recipient [ibid] which provides for the relevance of cognitive equivalence, i. e. the (temporary) result of a comparative cognitive process involving two texts and their respective reception, simulated in the minds of translators during translation activity [18, p. 9]. Therefore, the translation process involves comparison of the conceptual worldviews characteristic of the primary message sender (author) and the primary message recipient (translator) in order to achieve their highest overlapping [15, p. 25] since the mental image or meaning implied by the author and that actualized in the recipient's mind are to be as close as possible [4, p. 25].

The translator shall take into account that PNs, though present in language, only represent a potential means of communicating a specific idea, their meanings remain dormant [6] until actualized in discourse. Proper names which achieved the precedent status “can be treated as ‘windows’ through which one can reach deeper layers of meaning and which offer us access to complex structured packages of stereotypical knowledge” pertaining to a specific culture [7 www]. Thus, they are marked not only by the mental models pertaining to the corresponding nation but also by personal preferences of the author who follows patterns of the reality conceptualization characteristic of the culture he represents, still choosing the name which would prove most expressive in communicating the necessary meaning in a given context. Consequently, inspired both by the author and by his/her own perception of the target audience, the translator re-creates, according to his/her own conceptualization model, the original in a new target language context. [8 www].

Results and discussion. The degree of cognitive equivalence established by the translator may vary depending on how disparate the source and target cultures are which determines the translator’s decisions and dictates whether it is possible to preserve the imagery surrounding the name or it must be sacrificed to convey the appropriate meaning.

The following example illustrates the highest degree of cognitive equivalence as the PN, the author chooses to describe an ancient architectural monument, invokes the same associations for any person living in the modern world. Its cross-cultural or even universal nature allows the translator to use a direct equivalent without any substitution or explanation.

Piecing together the tales which Norriss collected for me, and supplementing them with the accounts of several savants who had studied the ruins, I deduced that Exham Priory stood on the site of a prehistoric temple; a Druidical or ante-Druidical thing which must have been contemporary with Stonehenge [13 www].

Перекази, які для мене зібрав Норріс, і зіставляючи їх із записами науковців, які вивчали ці руїни, я дійшов висновку, що Ексгемський пріорат стояв на місці доісторичного храму – друїдичної або й додруїдичної споруди, яка була чи не сучасницею Стоунхенджа [9, р. 314].

Regardless of age, social background or education, a Ukrainian reader will be able to decode the PN meaning as Stonehenge has captured imagination not only of researchers from different countries seeking to reveal secrets of this ancient architectural monument and establish its purpose but also of ordinary people interested in historical mysteries. In addition, the author himself specifies the fundamental feature it is supposed to communicate. Thus, the mental image produced by the author will remain relevant for the target reader ensuring maximum cognitive equivalence.

A lower level of equivalence is observed if the name used in the original did not acquire the precedent status in the target culture; however, the translator provides a commentary supplementing the background knowledge of the reader sufficiently to interpret the PN without detriment to the cultural specifics of the source text. Despite the fact that the Giants’ Causeway is included in the UNESCO World Heritage list, its name will hardly actualize the necessary image in the mind of an ordinary Ukrainian recipient who is not knowledgeable in the field of architecture or Irish history and folklore.

On the seventh day a blur of smoke arose on the horizon ahead, and then the tall black towers of Dylath-Leen, which is built mostly of basalt. Dylath-Leen with its thin angular towers looks in the distance like a bit of the Giants’ Causeway, and its streets are dark and uninviting [12 www].

Сьомого дня на видноколі попереду здійнялася наволока диму, з-за якої прозирали високі чорні вежі збудованого з базальту Дайлет-Ліна. Дайлет Лін з його кутастими вежами здалеку трохи скидався на Дорогу гігантів, вулиці ж його були темні та непривітні [10, р. 94].

Realizing potential barriers the reader might face, the translator uses the commonly accepted equivalent available in the Ukrainian language but also offers an explanation allowing for visualization of the landscape unfolding before the travelers. The commentary, thus, states that “the Giants’ Causeway is a geological formation of volcanic origin at the North Ireland coast consisting of hexagonal, octagonal basalt columns whose location resembles the remains of an ancient road. According to the legend, the road was constructed by the Irish mythical giant Fionn mac Cumhail”. The presented explanation proves to be comprehensive as it not only enables the reader to imagine the appropriate architectural structure but also determines the country of the PN origin and its significance for the Irish since the time of myth coinage. Consequently, the reader will obtain all the necessary information to reveal the imagery the author embodies in the PN.

Nevertheless, the translator’s commentaries sometimes turn out to be incongruent to the context they are used in which leads to the lowest degree of cognitive equivalence. If a PN is unknown for the target culture representatives but the translator decides to preserve it in the target text, the only alternative for ensuring the correspondence between the mental image created by the author and that suggested by the reader’s background knowledge and world view is to provide a commentary which would account for the use of a particular PN as a means of conveying a specific range of characteristics. However, the commentary to the PN presented in the following example proves completely irrelevant to the given situation. William Morris was an extremely complex and creative personality, a poet, a novelist, a painter, a designer, a convinced socialism follower which influenced his work as well. Obviously, it is his activity in the field of visual arts which is referred to, since William Morris exerted the most significant influence on the history of ornamental patterns inspired by the nature and the Medieval Ages. Currently, his patterns are most wide spread in the wallpaper design though few people realize whose creations those are.

There was wallpaper-very unusual in humid Bombay-with the repetitive Compton pattern of William Morris in olive green and flesh pinks [17 www].

Стіни були обклеєні шпалерами – нечастий випадок у Бомбеї з його вологим кліматом; на них виднів квітковий орнамент у дусі Вільяма Моріса в оливково-зелених і тілесно-рожевих тонах [16, р. 238].

The translator transposes the PN with no changes stating that “William Morris (1834 – 1896) is an English painter, writer, statesman, close to the Pre-Raphaelites”. Such a commentary appears irrelevant since it does not facilitate the PN interpretation while the mention of the Pre-Raphaelites may only confuse the reader who is not familiar with art movements and even if he/she is, the Pre-Raphaelite ideas involve a break with the classical tradition which produces little influence on the ornamental patterns by William Morris.

The translator's intuition suggests that the PN is too specific and will not invoke any mental image allowing for visualization of a particular pattern, however, the commentary does not contribute to the appropriate interpretation of the PN. At the same time another PN is omitted, namely "Compton pattern" developed by W. Morris, being substituted with a neutral equivalent of "floral ornament" which, along with the range of colours described by the author, provides for at least a general visualization of the pattern.

Substitution of the PN provides for an "intermediate" degree of cognitive equivalence, since, on the one hand, it allows for conveying the principal meaning which is embodied in the name but on the other, replacing the PN with a different one cannot but influence the cognitive structure activated by the name. It would be appropriate to mention that traditionally "Cyclope" is not considered to be a proper name neither in English nor in Ukrainian language, still the author seeks to endow it with the corresponding status to present a personalized image of a character from the Greek mythology.

Across the chasm, the wavelets washed the base of the Cyclopean monolith, on whose surface I could now trace both inscriptions and crude sculptures [11].

На протилежному боці хвилі омивали підніжжя гігантського моноліту, на поверхні якого я розрізняв написи і барельєфи різьблених фігур [9, p. 26].

The decision of the translator may seem ambiguous as a cruel single-eyed son of Uranus and Gaia invoked by the author is well-known in the Ukrainian culture as well, as a result, preservation of the PN would cause no barriers to the interpretation by the target reader without requiring commentaries from the translator. The mental image actualized through the PN in the target text would correspond to that formed in the mind of the source text reader. Nevertheless, the translator takes the decision to substitute the PN opting for the adjective "гігантський" which matches the context but refers to another character from the myths of the Hellenes. Such a transformation may be justified by the fact that giants represent a more prototypical tool for communicating the idea of a large size or height to the Ukrainian audience without detriment to the cultural specifics of the PN.

Conclusions. Therefore, the degree of cognitive equivalence established in the PN translation heavily depends on the scope of cultural differences which the translator shall compensate provided his/her interpretation of the PN is comprehensive and relevant to the context. Another criterion which determines the overlapping of the author's and target reader's mental spaces is the ability of the translator to anticipate the scope of background knowledge the recipient possesses and, if necessary, to expand it to the level necessary for decoding the original message.

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Когнитивная эквивалентность как критерий перевода прецедентных имен

А. В. Ташенко

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается значение достижения когнитивной эквивалентности при передаче прецедентных имен в переводе. Также прослеживается влияние специфики культуры оригинала и перевода на уровень когнитивной эквивалентности, который может установить переводчик в зависимости от различий в картине мира автора и целевого читателя. В статье проиллюстрированы решения переводчика, направленные на максимального уровня эквивалентности, и представлены расхождения, которые могут возникать при использовании одного способа перевода в различных контекстах использования имени.

Ключевые слова: когнитивная эквивалентность, культура оригинала, ментальный образ, прецедентное имя, целевая культура.