

The Job of Eponymical Items Translation.

It is generally claimed that Russian texts are made from English texts in such a way that the proper names are not given in translation but in transliteration. It is not surprising, as observations show it is really practiced this way. Still, there are quite a few proper names that seem to violate this rule of thumb.

An example are word combinations that consist of a proper name and the other part of it are regular words. Eponyms are implied here. Though prior to defining the limits of the kind as well as various related complex issues dealing with eponymous phrases functioning in Russian translations, it is a good idea to devote a bit of attention to the concept of the eponym and the way it works in the language of linguistics. The array of all words in both English and Russian is divided into two big groups: appellatives and proper names. If you have a grasp of ancient Greek, you might know that the lexical unit "eponym" means "naming" or "giving the name". For ancient people eponyms originally meant people, deities or great warriors, whose legendary names were used to give names to villages, tribes and different objects, as well as governmental positions (e.g. archonts, consuls). At the same period of time the actual notion of "eponym" became more inclusive, though it was used to refer not only to the personal name, but now it could be used to name animals or an objects.

These days the linguistic term "eponym" is more often used with reference to common words that have been singled out in a text on the principle of displacing one lexical item from the class of proper names to the category of common words with an immediate allocation of non-literal lexical meaning. Hence, we work with three elements of an eponym:

1. being or object
2. proper name
3. regular word.

When an interpreter deals with an English text, they should assume the background knowledge of the English text intended audience and the level of awareness of the Russian reader. The meaning of eponymism is built on stereotypical mental connections concerning a concrete, particular eponym and having the nature of encyclopedic connotation. Differences among these connotations in the English and Russian languages predetermine a number of cases of appellativization of proper names. The primary question related to eponymisms is the matter of their cultural transparency which is a secret feature that depends on the cultural competence and background knowledge of Russian native speakers. Then the question arises: should the Russian translator consider such issues? A number of eponyms have a joint cultural context which makes translators job easy, for example "superman" or "Lolita".

If there is no clear understanding of the context among the speakers from the two cultures, then again the task of an interpreter is pretty easy. (e.g.: Adonis named after a handsome guy loved by both Aphrodite and Persephone and murdered by a wild boar, or the game of badminton that got its name from Badminton in the South West of England, country seat of the Duke of Beaufort, where people started playing it). There is a problem only when an eponym is understandable in English, but means absolutely nothing to the Russian audience. However, not every eponymism causes problems. The phrases which are hard to "see through", do not cause any problems to Russian speakers.

About the Author

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