

**METHODS OF TRANSLATING RUSSIAN AGNONYMS INTO ENGLISH:
LINGUOCULTURAL AND TRANSLATION STUDIES PERSPECTIVES**

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Abstract

This article examines the specific features of translating Russian agnonyms into English in literary texts. It analyzes the causes of translation difficulties arising from the linguocultural specificity of agnonyms and identifies the main strategies used to render them in translation. Particular attention is paid to stylistic neutralization, transcription accompanied by explanatory commentary, and the use of literary equivalents.

Keywords

agnonym, literary translation, cultural semantics, stylistic neutralization, transcription, linguoculturology.

Introduction

In literary discourse, authors frequently employ lexical units that remain unfamiliar or insufficiently understood even by native speakers of the language. Such elements are referred to in modern linguistics as agnonyms, a term introduced by V. V. Morkovkin and A. V. Morkovkina. Agnonyms are defined as words and phraseological units whose meanings are unknown or only partially understood by a significant portion of language users (Morkovkin & Morkovkina, 1997).

Within literary texts, agnonyms perform important stylistic and cultural functions. They convey national and cultural realities, create an atmosphere of authenticity, and enable authors to represent social, regional, and historical characteristics of the depicted environment. However, precisely these cultural and stylistic features make their translation particularly challenging.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

From a translation studies perspective, agnonyms constitute a specific category of nonequivalent or partially equivalent vocabulary. Their semantic structure encompasses not only denotative meaning but also a complex set of cultural, associative, and stylistic components.

E. M. Vereshchagin and V. G. Kostomarov emphasized that the semantic structure of a word contains culturally conditioned information that directly reflects national experience. This extralinguistic component is considered the most difficult element to transfer in translation (Vereshchagin & Kostomarov, 2005).

A similar viewpoint was expressed by Edward Sapir, who argued that the lexical system of a language is inseparable from the culture it serves and reflects its historical development (Sapir, 1993).

Translation Difficulties in Rendering Agnonyms

The principal challenges in translating agnonyms stem from several interrelated factors:

Cultural specificity — agnonyms often denote realities absent from the target culture.

Dialectal and social markedness — many agnonyms belong to regional or colloquial speech varieties.

Stylistic coloring — they may convey emotional tone, social identity, or individual speech characteristics.

As noted by V. N. Komissarov, the use of dialectal forms in the target language is not always appropriate because they may evoke associations with entirely different social groups, thus distorting the author's intended meaning (Komissarov, 2002).

Main Methods of Translating Russian Agnonyms

An analysis of English translations of works by V. Shukshin and F. Abramov makes it possible to identify several widely used translation strategies.

1. Stylistic Neutralization (Equivalent Translation)

The most common method involves rendering stylistically marked agnonyms with neutral literary equivalents in the target language. While this approach preserves the core denotative meaning, it often results in the loss of social and emotional nuances.

Research indicates that the overwhelming majority of phonetic and dialectal features in characters' speech are not reproduced in translation and are instead replaced with standard literary language (Kobeleva, 2007).

This strategy is primarily motivated by the need to ensure clarity and readability for the target audience.

2. Practical Transcription with Explanatory Commentary

In some cases, translators retain the original form of the agnonym through transcription, supplementing it with explanatory notes. This method helps preserve national color while ensuring comprehension.

It is particularly characteristic of texts aimed at readers unfamiliar with rural Russian culture.

3. Explicatory Translation (Descriptive Rendering)

Another strategy involves conveying agnonyms through descriptive translation that explicates their meaning. This approach is used when preserving the original form would impede understanding.

Linguocultural Dimension of Agnonym Translation

The translation of agnonyms represents not only a linguistic but also a cultural challenge. These lexical units function as carriers of culturally specific knowledge, reflecting traditions, everyday life, and worldview.

Therefore, their translation requires a careful balance between preserving cultural uniqueness and maintaining communicative accessibility for the target audience.

Conclusion

In summary, the translation of Russian agnonyms into English constitutes a complex task involving the transfer of culturally embedded semantic content. The most commonly employed strategies include stylistic neutralization, transcription accompanied by explanatory commentary, and descriptive translation. The choice of method depends on the type of text, its intended audience, and the functional role of agnonyms within the literary structure.

Future research may focus on developing methods that allow for more effective preservation of stylistic and cultural specificity in the translation of agnonyms.

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