

Tamás Farkas

✉ farkas.tamas@btk.elte.hu

🆔 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7732-2302>

🏠 ELTE Eötvös Loránd University

🌐 Budapest, Hungary

🔗 <https://doi.org/10.4467/K7478.47/22.23.17727>

Translation and Mistranslation of Proper Names: The Challenge of Proper Names and Common Words in the Translation Process

Abstract

When translating, there are numerous factors to take into consideration in the process of choosing the equivalents of proper names in the target language. Interpreting translation as a special form of interlingual and intercultural communication, we have to take into account both the language-internal and extralinguistic factors. Proper names raise a lot of questions on account of their special semantic structure, multiple functions and deep sociocultural embeddedness. The paper focuses on the interpretation of a linguistic expression as a proper name and the necessity of translating proper names differently from common words. It approaches its topic from a special and novel perspective: studying the cases of inadequate translation of proper names. The examples are taken from different genres, but mostly contemporary and everyday texts translated from other languages into Hungarian. Using these examples, the paper presents and analyses the differences and connections between the categories of proper names and common words and the types of translation mistakes arising from their misinterpretation. It presents and exemplifies the translation operations to follow in general, and characteristic potential mistake types in particular when proper names based on common words are translated.

Keywords

translation of names, translation errors, proper names vs appellatives, English and Hungarian names, applied onomastics

1. The translations of proper names and their study

1.1. The problem of translating proper names

It is a widespread view in literature that proper names are usually not translated. The reasoning behind these opinions is based partly on a narrow interpretation of the notion of translation, partly on the idea that proper names have no meaning (Slíz, 2019, pp. 17–18).

J. Soltész (1979) considers the use of the equivalent of a given proper name in another language to be an act of translation (p. 119). In this sense any instance of providing a target language equivalent can be considered translation, including the cases that seem to be seamless transference (not to mention the fact that even during this process pronunciation often changes, e.g., Eng. *London* [ˈlʌndən] > Hung. *London* [ˈlɒndɒn]; see Sato, 2016, p. 2; Slíz, 2019, pp. 13–14, 20). The supposed meaninglessness of proper names, on the other hand, is no obstacle either, because other theories, which are much more suitable for addressing this problem – and which I have no space to discuss here – give a completely different and more complex picture of the semantics of proper names (cf. J. Soltész, 1979, pp. 22–33; Van Langendonck, 2007, pp. 20–84).

The problems of translating proper names attracted more attention around and following the turn of the millennium in studies related to different languages (cf. Moya, 2000, Ballard, 2001, Vermes, 2005, etc.), adding new aspects and findings to our knowledge of the subject. In the following, I will merely concentrate on a few general lessons drawn from the previous studies, before moving on to the actual topic of this paper, that is, the questions of mistranslations of proper names and the role played in this phenomenon by the identical form of a proper name and a common word.

1.2. The diversity of translating proper names

Approaching translation as a special, interlingual and intercultural form of communication requires many language-internal and extralinguistic aspects to be considered. The different types of proper names, their special semantic structure, various possible functions, and deep sociocultural embeddedness can raise many questions and present translators with several challenges.

During the translation of proper names, translators must apply appropriate knowledge of the source and target language, as well as the necessary general and special cultural competencies.

The behaviour of proper names in translation is influenced by several factors, and does not conform to a clear and easily described system. Let us demonstrate it with examples¹ from various proper name types, with foreign language names vs. their commonly used Hungarian equivalents:

Equivalents with different perspectives – e.g., names of kings of Poland:

(1a)

(Pol.) *Kazimierz Wielki* – (Hung.) *Nagy Kázmér*

(‘Casimir the Great’ – ‘Casimir the Great’; a king of Poland)

(1b)

(Pol.) *Ludwik Węgierski* – (Hung.) *Nagy Lajos*

(‘Louis the **Hungarian**’ – ‘Louis the **Great**’; a king of Hungary, later also king of Poland)

Semantic or formal equivalents – e.g., names of famous squares in capital cities:

(2a)

(Rus.) *Krasnaya ploschad’* – (Hung.) *Vörös tér*

(‘Red Square’ – ‘**Red Square**’; in Moscow)

(2b)

(Chin.) *Tiān’ānmén Guǎngchǎng* – (Hung.) *Tienanmen tér* or *Mennyei béke tere*

(‘Square of Heavenly Peace’ – ‘**Tienanmen Square**’ or ‘**Square of Heavenly Peace**’; in Beijing)

(2c)

(Esp.) *Plaza Mayor* – (Hung.) *Plaza Mayor*

(‘Main Square’ – ‘*Plaza Mayor*’; in Madrid)

¹ The most notable differences are formatted in bold. The literal meanings of the names are provided in brackets, in single quotation marks. (For the commonly used equivalents of the examples in different languages, see e.g., respective Wikipedia pages in different languages.)

Literal or conceptual equivalence – e.g., names of international organisations:

(3a)

(Eng.) *North Atlantic Treaty Organization* – (Hung.) *Észak-atlanti Szerződés Szervezete*

(‘North Atlantic Treaty Organization’ – ‘North Atlantic Treaty Organisation’)

(3b)

(Eng.) *United Nations* – (Hung.) *Egyesült Nemzetek Szervezete*

(‘United Nations’ – ‘United Nations’ **Organisation**)

International or national naming – e.g., names of international organisations:

(4a)

(Eng.) *NATO* – (Hung.) *NATO*

(< Eng. *The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation*)

(4b)

(Eng.) *UN* – (Hung.) *ENSZ*

(< Hung. *Egyesült Nemzetek Szervezete*)

The list of different examples could be continued at length. However, despite this variety of conflicting examples, there are some regularities and aspects that determine the possibilities for translating proper names to a certain degree. One of the most important of these factors is the linguistic structure of the name: a number of different questions arise from the translatability of etymologically transparent and etymologically opaque proper names and name elements (cf. J. Soltész, 1979, pp. 118–123; Farkas, 2009), which, incidentally, also have far reaching consequences regarding the translation of different types of names.

1.3. The topic, sources and methods of the paper

The paper will discuss the problem of translating etymologically transparent proper names that include common word elements, and also discusses the translation of common words that seem – at times deceptively – similar

to such proper names. In this context, it draws attention to the importance of interpreting a linguistic unit as a proper name or a common word, and to the importance of addressing the differences and correlations between the proper name and the common word categories in the translation process.

The study will present the subject from a special and novel perspective, unexplored in the literature so far, based on proper name translations that can be found inadequate by the target language audience. Its examples are primarily from a corpus collected by the author: translations from foreign languages (mainly with English as a source or intermediary language) into Hungarian, and from texts of various genres, but mostly contemporary and everyday translations (especially: electronic press, TV guide, film dubbing, book publishing).² The examples of (mis)translations of proper names in the study are provided with their context in some cases, or without when it was less relevant or not available. The exact (literal and structurally equivalent) meaning of the Hungarian target language examples is regularly provided, while the expected (adequate) translation is also given alongside the inadequate translations.

Some of the listed problems are more general in nature, while others can only be interpreted within the lingual and cultural traditions of Hungarian translation practice. I hope that this indirect approach used by analysing specific translation error types will help not only to present the complex issues surrounding the translation of proper names but lead to a deeper understanding of these as well.

2. The process of translating proper names

“Looking at translated texts we find that translators do all sorts of things with proper names” (Nord, 2003, p. 182). It means that the translation of proper names can be completed through several translation operations (see in Section 2.3).

² Other primary sources were the examples presented in the “Rühellem a félrefordításokat” (‘I despise mistranslations’) Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/szodium>) and on the “Leiterjakab blog” (formerly leiterjakab.blog.hu, later leiterjakab.nyest.hu) collected by others.

However, this must be preceded by the identification of the language unit in question as a proper name (Farkas, 2007, pp. 170–171; Slíz, 2019, pp. 22–23). In the best case, this is completed when the identificational value of the term is known and recognised by the translator. In other cases, the translator may be able to infer the value of the unit as a proper name from its context, its formal and/or semantic structure, or from its written form (most typically, the term being capitalised). These factors also influence which applicable translation operation will be best suited to the term.

2.1. Proper name or common word

A classic mistake may be an error in identifying a proper name as a common word or, on the contrary, a common word as a proper name – thus leading to an inadequate translation. The following historical examples³ (Farkas, 2007, p. 177): proper name > common word (5a) and common word > proper name (5b) are based on German > Hungarian translations,⁴ published in the Hungarian press some 150 years ago:

(5a)

(Ger.) *der **Faust** von Goethe* > (Hung.) *Goethe **ökle*** [↔ ...***Faustja***, ‘his Faust’]
 (‘the **Faust** of Goethe’ > ‘the **fist** of Goethe’)

(5b)

(Ger.) *in der Nähe des **Thatortes*** > (Hung.) ***Thatorte** közelében* [↔ ***a tetthely***..., ‘crime scene’]
 (‘near the **crime scene**’ > ‘near **Thatorte**’)

As the examples demonstrate, these errors can be caused by inattentiveness and deficiencies in the cultural and/or linguistic knowledge of the translator.

The problem can be so characteristic that it served as the basis for an appellative *leiterjakab*, used in Hungarian to denote an ‘(often amusing)

³ In the following, the characteristic differences are still highlighted in bold, while the expected (adequate) Hungarian translation is also given in square brackets (after the ↔ sign).

⁴ In German orthography nouns are written with a capital initial. Cf. *Faust* ‘fist’, *Tatort* ~ *Thatort* (archaic spelling) ‘crime scene’.

error in translation caused by misunderstanding'. The source of this term was a Hungarian newspaper article based on a Viennese article published in 1863 about the sensational balloon flight by the Frenchman Nadar (Bárdosi, 2015, pp. 330–331). The Hungarian journalist created a quasi-personal name⁵ of a non-existent entity (Hung. *Leiter Jakab*) from the term denoting the ladder in Jacob's biblical dream (Ger. *Jakobs Leiter*) by failing to translate one of the elements:

(6)

(Ger.) *Empor, empor, wir wollen so hoch hinauffliegen wie **Jakobs Leiter***
(‘Up, up, we want to fly as high as **Jacob’s Ladder**’)

(Hung.) *Fel, fel, oly magasra akarunk szállni, mint **Leiter Jakab** [↔ ...**Jákob lajtorjája**, ‘Jacob’s ladder’]*

(‘Up, up, we want to fly as high as **Jakab Leiter**’)

Such situations and consequences of different translation strategies can be illustrated with examples closer to the present day as well, for example, from the Star Wars universe.⁶

In one of the scenes of the very first Star Wars film in 1977, the term [*the*] **Clone Wars** was used but received no further explanation, leaving fans in doubt about its exact meaning for a long time. Thus, translators of the early Star Wars movies and books faced the problem of how to translate the first element from the proper name that obviously referred to an event. Their task may have been complicated by the fact that the concept and the corresponding common word (*klón* ‘clone’ in Hungarian) could not be considered commonly known in Hungarian some decades ago.

The dubbing of the first film – choosing a less obvious and yet safest solution – simply left the problematic word out of the phrase to be translated:

⁵ According to the Hungarian surname + given name order and the translation practices of that time, the ‘first name + last name’ order was also reversed in the example of the mis-translation. A difference also occurs concerning the given name: its equivalent is *Jakab* in the Hungarian onomasticon, but *Jákob* in the case of the patriarch.

⁶ The sources of the examples are: the original film and book trilogy, Timothy Zahn’s Thrawn Trilogy, and more precisely the Hungarian translations of these (Farkas, 2007, p. 176), which were completed before the publication of the prequel trilogy that shed light on the actual meaning of the term in question.

(7a)

a háború ('the war')

Subsequent translators of the term followed two different types of strategies.⁷ The word *Clone* was either interpreted as a proper name and left unchanged (as if it were a place name or personal name) or was considered a common word and translated accordingly.

Thus, the first solution, *Clone*, led to a result reminiscent of a proper name – written with a capital initial and with a foreign spelling, and being etymologically opaque:

(7b)

a Clone Háború ~ *a Clone Háborúk* ('the **Clone** war' ~ 'the **Clone** wars')*a Clone-i háború* ~ *a clone-i háború* ('the war **of Clone**')*a Clone elleni háború* ('the war **against Clone**')

The other solution: *klón*, on the other hand, simply used the appropriate common word that also exists in Hungarian – in lower case, with a Hungarian spelling:

(7c)

a klón háború ~ *a klónháborúk* ('the **clone** war' ~ 'the **clone** wars')*a klónok háborúja* ('the war **of the clones**')

The difference between the two translation strategies (7b vs 7c) is further emphasised by the fact that in Hungarian the names of events are written with lower case letters – thus, the difference between the first letters (*Clone* – *klón*) also enhances the supposed (proprietary or non-proprietary) meaning.

As it is now common knowledge, the latter strategy (7c) proved to be the adequate interpretation, and the exact equivalent (*A klónok háborúja* 'the war of the clones') was canonised by the film dubbing of the prequel trilogy.

⁷ The singular or plural form of the word *wars* is not examined in the current context. In the English meanings provided, the linguistic nature of the Hungarian term is reflected through the use of lower and upper case letter in ways that may differ from traditional English orthography. In Hungarian, names of events are written in the lower case and are traditionally not considered proper names. However, according to their actual linguistic status, they can be considered a less prototypical subcategory of proper names and are treated as such in the current study.

2.2. Factors that influence translation

Creating an adequate translation and the adequate use of the translated name may require the translator to consider several further factors related to the linguistic structure and meaning of the source language term. The reference value for the signified, or at least its place in the categories of the real world (e.g., the type of the proper name, or in the case of personal names, even the gender and nationality of the named person) may have to be correctly identified by the translator, similarly to connotative or figurative meanings, and the borders (beginning and end) of the name, internal structure and nominative case of the name (with examples of Hungarian related translations, see Farkas, 2007; Slíz, 2019). The text as a whole, its genre, its target audience, and the national traditions of translation, etc., may be further influencing factors. However, these aspects can only be mentioned here; their in-depth analysis is beyond the scope of the present study.

2.3. Translation operations

Once the linguistic entity in the source text has been identified as a proper name, the appropriate translation operation must be selected and performed. The different possible types of translation operations result in different forms in the target language in terms of the character and extent of the difference. In literature we find a wide range of typologies to describe these (cf. Vermes, 2005, pp. 3–14, 112–117; Mizani, 2008; Sanaty Pour, 2009; Sato, 2016, p. 2, etc.), although these partly just exhibit superficial differences when compared with each other.

In the following, I will apply the typology proposed by Vermes (2005), which I will first briefly summarise here. The same proper name, **William Shakespeare**, and the possible translations of its constituent elements⁸ into Hungarian will provide the illustrative examples for this typology of translation operations, as follows:

(i) Transference:

William Shakespeare: unchanged transfer of the full name to the target language. Here (i.e., in the case of this name type and specifically, this name): the default solution in contemporary Hungarian (from the 20th century).

⁸ With the element highlighting the translation operation in question in bold.

(ii) Substitution (with two subtypes):

- *Shakespeare Vilmos*: replacement of the (given) name with the conventional target language equivalent. Here: the typical personal name translation practice in 19th century Hungarian.
- *Sekszpír Vilmos*: adapting the pronunciation and/or spelling of the (sur) name to the pronunciation and/or spelling customs of the target language. Here: also used in the 19th century, but much rarer.

(iii) Translation in a stricter sense:

Dárdarázó Vilmos ~ *Lándzsarázó Vilmos* (*dárda* ~ *lándzsa* ‘spear’ + *rázó* ‘shaker’): translation of (sur)name elements according to their meaning as common words. Here: a rare procedure, stylistically marked (refined or playful).

(iv) Modification:⁹

a nagy angol drámaíró (‘the great English playwright’): significant changes to the full name and its structure in any other way (replacement with other elements, or even avoidance of the proper name entirely). Here: a rare procedure, possible due to the author’s unique fame.

Even if further explanations are not possible here, a few basic observations must be noted in connection with the translation operations exemplified above:

- When translating multi-element proper names, multiple translation operations can be used at the same time (for each element and the name structure as well, see Slíz, 2019, pp. 29–31).¹⁰
- Several translation operations may be possible in the case of the same proper name, but different methods may lead to results with differing uses (see above).
- Translation errors can be interpreted as deviations from the expected translation operation and the expected target language equivalent. They may prove more or less problematic in the transmission of the original

⁹ Changing the sequence of full name elements from the ‘given name + surname’ order to the ‘surname + given name’ order of the Hungarian language (see in (ii) and (iii)) is also a kind of modification, and an example of common practice until the 20th century in the Hungarian language.

¹⁰ However, the present study will not examine these in more detail, the examples are used only to illustrate the various phenomenon in question (highlighted in bold).

meaning, especially in relation to ensuring identifiability (for more examples, see Farkas, 2007, 2011). The error is often caused by the name not being translated, or more precisely, by the unchanged transference, or at least by the translator using a less transformative translation method than expected (see in Section 3 later).

- The full range of translation operations is available to the translator during the “first” translation, and the choice between them is influenced by the factors mentioned above. Later, when a more widely known, “accepted” target language equivalent of a foreign proper name develops in any way, the translation of the name usually requires simple substitution with it (Slíz, 2019, p. 21). In this case, the absence of this substitution could be considered a translation error.

However, providing the appropriate target language equivalent adequately is often by no means a simple or straightforward issue.

3. Common words and name elements derived from common words in translation

A complete overview of the translation problems arising from the relationship between the categories of proper names and common words (see Farkas, 2007) is beyond the scope of the current paper. Thus, the remaining section will concentrate on two typical phenomena: (i) common words mistakenly translated as proper names and (ii) inadequate translations of proper names based on common words. The following examples were selected from English > Hungarian translations.

3.1. Common words treated as proper names

One of the most striking types of translation error is the unchanged transfer of a foreign common word into the target language text, which can be caused by its textual position, capitalisation (for any reason), and the translator’s failure

to recognise the common word nature of the term. The unchanged transfer is one of the possible translation operations in the case of proper names, just it is not always useful and adequate.

In the case of common words, however, it is typically not possible, except for realia (culture-specific linguistic elements) and neologisms, which may be left unchanged. This is because, in the case of common words, the original meaning is lost as a result of an unchanged transfer, and it may even lead to a fundamentally different meaning due to proper name-like characteristics of the term in the target language (in the examples here,¹¹ seemingly suggesting a reference to a certain person or brand):

(8a)

(Hung.) *Chivalry* nem halt meg [↔ *A lovagiasság...*, ‘chivalry’]

(“*Chivalry*” is not dead”; film dubbing)

(8b)

(Hung.) ...ám *Lent* kedvéért lemondott az alkohorról [↔ ...*a nagyböjt...*, ‘Lent’]

(‘He gave up alcohol because of “*Lent*”; novel)

(8c)

(Hung.) *Ne aggódj, ott van mellette German Shepherd* [↔ ...*egy/a német juhász-kutya*, ‘a/the German Shepherd’]

(‘Don’t worry, there is “*German Shepherd*” with it’; film dubbing)

(8d)

(Hung.) *Daniel* ing; *Wool* pulóver; *John Devin* nadrág [↔ *gyapjú...*, ‘wool’]

(‘*Daniel* shirt’, “*Wool*” pullover’, ‘*John Devin* trousers’; signs in a clothing store window)

In these cases, the Hungarian target language examples are offered deceptively proper name characteristics by etymological opacity, a foreign spelling, capitalisation, and in some cases, the lack of an article – in contrast to

¹¹ The literal meaning of the Hungarian target language examples will be provided. Elements transferred to them from the source language are given in unchanged form. In this case, the parts considered as translation errors are highlighted in bold italics and in quotation marks. The expected (adequate) Hungarian translation is also given in square brackets (after the ↔ sign).

the expected translation (provided in the square brackets above) which preserves the original meaning.

3.2. Translation of proper names or name elements based on common words

Common words that have become proper names or proper name elements may lose their original descriptive role and only be used as proper names and their elements. These changes can also be observed in several ways (morphological behaviour, sensitivity to change, etc.). Often these elements are translated with unchanged transference (typically, e.g., surnames, ship names, brand names, certain place names), while in other cases, they are translated in the strict sense (e.g., most types of titles, most institution names, other place names).

In the following, I intend to briefly illustrate the most characteristic types of the inadequate translations of proper names that are based on common words. However, a detailed analysis of the background of these errors, for instance, examining how the name type affects translation (see, e.g., Särkkä, 2007; Farkas, 2009; Slíz, 2019) is beyond the scope of this presentation.

3.2.1. “Undertranslation”

More specifically: translation by transference instead of another translation operation, most commonly the substitution of the target language equivalent created through translation in a stricter sense.

If these elements are simply transferred in their original form into Hungarian, they impede comprehension of the target language text:

(9a)

(Hung.) ...*a történelem leghíresebb kalózeit mutatja be **Eric Bloodax**-tól [sic] (...) Véres Morganig* [↔ ...*Véresfejszélű Erik*től...; ‘Eric Haraldsson or Eric Bloodaxe, 10th-century Norwegian ruler’]

(‘...presents history’s most famous pirates from “**Eric Bloodax**” [sic] (...) to Bloody [i.e., Henry] Morgan’; TV guide)

(9b)

(Hung.) *És tényleg földönkívüliek élnek az **Area 51** területén?* [↔ ...**51-es körzet**..., 'Area 51; U.S. military base']

(‘And do aliens really live in “**Area 51**”?’; TV guide)

(9c)

(Hung.) *Álomautók: VW **Beetle*** [↔ ...Volkswagen **Bogár**, ‘Volkswagen Beetle; car model’]

(‘Dream Cars: “Volkswagen **Beetle**”’; title of a TV show)

(9d)

(Hung.) *...a **Second Bull Run-ban*** [↔ ...**a második Bull Run-i csatában**, ‘Second Battle of Bull Run or Battle of Second Manassas; American Civil War’]

(‘in the “**Second Bull Run**”’; film dubbing)

3.2.2. “Mistranslation”

More specifically: a translation in the stricter sense, usually instead of the substitution of a target language equivalent previously created with the similar method.

Such errors can limit or block understanding in the target language, even in the case of an otherwise accurate word for word translation:

(10a)

(Hung.) ***Szilikon**-völgy* [↔ **Szilícium**-völgy, ‘Silicon Valley; a region in California and a centre of high technology’]

(‘**Silicone** Valley’ [↔ ‘**Silicon** Valley’, false friends]; film dubbing)

(10b)

(Hung.) *Nemzetek **Ligája*** [↔ **Népszövetség** ~ **Nemzetek Szövetsége**, ‘League of Nations; predecessor to the UN’]

(‘**League** of Nations’ [↔ ‘**Népek Szövetsége**’ ~ ‘**Nemzetek Szövetsége**’, word for word translation instead of the less exact traditional equivalent used in the target language]; film dubbing)

(10c)

(Hung.) *Angol csatorna* [↔ *La Manche csatorna*, ‘English Channel; between England and France’]

(‘**English** Channel’ [↔ ‘*La Manche* channel’, based on a different intermediary language]; board game map)

(10d)

(Hung.) *Közép-Kelet* [↔ *Közel-Kelet*, ‘Middle East; region in Southwestern Asia and Northeastern Africa’]

(‘**Middle** East’ [↔ ‘**Near** East’, based on a different geographical perspective and later used name]; media)

3.2.3. “Overtranslation”

More specifically: translation in the stricter sense, instead of the substitution of the target language equivalent typically formed through transference.

Such errors can also impede target language understanding to various degrees:

(11a)

(Hung.) *Marks és Spencer* [↔ *Marks & Spencer*, ‘Marks & Spencer; brand and shop’]

(‘**Marks and Spencer**’ [↔ “*Marks & Spencer*”]; novel)

(11b)

(Hung.) *Zene TV* [↔ *Music TV*, ‘Music TV; TV channel’]

(‘**Music** TV’ [↔ “*Music*” TV’]; film dubbing)

(11c)

(Hung.) *A Roosevelt-féle új egyezség bevezetés után...* [↔ *New Deal*, ‘New Deal; F. D. Roosevelt’s reforms’]

(‘After the introduction of Roosevelt’s **new deal**...’ [↔ ‘After the introduction of Roosevelt’s “*New Deal*”...’]; novel)

(11d)

(Hung.) *Főzőcskét is nézel? A Júlia gyermekét?* [↔ *Julia Childot?*, ‘Julia Child; chef and television personality’]

(‘Do you watch cooking shows? **Julia’s child?**’ [↔ ‘Do you watch cooking shows? “*Julia Child*”?’]; film dubbing)

4. Variety in the practice of name translation

Multiple translations of a proper name can be created within the same target language and can also be used – in a certain sense, to varying degrees – parallel to each other. The most obvious possibilities and examples of this are different translations of the same literary work (see e.g., the case study of Carlo Collodi’s “The Adventures of Pinocchio”: Fábíán, 2006a, 2006b). However, it is similar in the case of different literary or cinematic adaptations of the same story, the sequels, various translations and genres, and references pointing beyond the work (intertextual and others):

(12a)

(Eng.) *Little John* (Robin Hood’s companion in the Robin Hood stories) >

(Hung.) *Little John* ~ *Kicsi John* (‘Little John’)

(12b)

(Eng.) *Millennium Falcon* (spaceship in the Star Wars stories) >

(Hung.) *Millennium Falcon* ~ *Ezeréves Súlyom* (‘millennial falcon’)

(12c)

(Fr.) *Agecanonix* (in English: *Geriatrics*, the oldest Gaul in the Asterix stories)¹² >

(Hung.) *Sokadikix* (cf. *sokadik X* ‘umpteenth decade’) ~ *Tatix* (cf. *tat[a]* ‘old man’), *Matuzsálemix* (cf. *matuzsálem* ‘Methuselah’) ~ *Rozogavénix* (cf. *rozoga vén* ‘frail old’) ~ *Nyavalyix* (cf. *nyavaly[a]* ‘malady, illness’)

¹² A good source of examples for a wide variety of creative translations in different languages (cf. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Asterix_characters).

Newer and different translation solutions may reflect differing approaches to translation, tastes, levels of creativity, and even considerations in publishing (including copyright issues), that is, reflecting deliberate intentions. However, quite often their roots are in the simple fact that translators do not know (or research) previous target language equivalents and retranslate the proper name in question. Both cases can limit the correct identification. For example, in the following titles:

(13a)

(Eng.) *Pilgrims of the Wild* (the story of Grey Owl [A. S. Belaney]) >

(Hung.) *A rengeteg zarándokai* ~ *A vadon vándorai* ('pilgrims of the wild'; synonyms; Hungarian title of the novel from 1941 and the film from 2004)

(13b)

(Eng.) *The Sign of Four* (A. C. Doyle's Sherlock Holmes story) >

(Hung.) *A négyek jele* ('The sign of four') ~ *A dilettáns detektív* ('The dilettante detective') ~ *A nábob kincse* ('The nabob's treasure') ~ *Az Agra kincse* ('The treasure of Agra') (novel titles, different editions)

(13c)

(Eng.) *Arabian Adventure* (American feature film) >

(Hung.) *Arab kaland* ('Arab adventure') ~ *Arábiai kalandok* ('Arabian adventures') ~ *Kalandok Arábiában* ('Adventures in Arabia') ~ *Elil rózsája* ('The rose of Elil'; film titles)

In some cases, the translator was clearly lost, uncertain or careless. This is especially obvious in cases when different translation methods can be found in the same text for the same name type (or even the same proper name) with no special reason:

(14a)

(Hung.) *Sea Hawk* (...) *Víztorony* ('"Sea Hawk" (...) Water Tower') (U.S. navy ships; film dubbing)

(14b)

(Hung.) ...*a világ egyik leghíresebb gyémántja, a Western Star* (...) *egy másik értékes gyémántnak, a Kelet Csillagának*... ('...one of the most famous diamonds

in the world, the “**Western Star**” (...) of another precious diamond, the **Eastern Star**...’ (names of gems; TV guide)

(14c)

(Hung.) *Escort Frigate* ~ *Escort Fregatt* ~ *Escort fregatt* [↔ *kísérő fregatt* or *kísérő hajó* ‘escort frigate, ship’, not actually a proper name] (name of a spaceship; novel)

5. Conclusions

Phenomena that differ from the expected translation solutions and can be interpreted as translation errors are extremely diverse and fall on a much broader range than those discussed in the present study. However, I should emphasise that choosing and applying the “expected” translation operation is far from straightforward in many cases and is influenced by a variety of factors (not only in literary translation but also everyday translation practice), and thus the question cannot be reduced to “good” or “bad”, “correct” or “incorrect” solutions.

In any case, translations can be considered inadequate in conveying the original meaning, making it difficult for the target language audience to understand the intended meaning. The primary risk lies in damaging the identification function of a proper name, but translations (especially literary translations) may also have to take into account other elements of how the proper name conveys meaning.

Due to their deep linguistic and sociocultural embeddedness and their many possible functions, proper names are sensitive to the translation process. A study of these characteristics offers a number of interesting and instructive perspectives and results for both general onomastics, applied linguistics and applied onomastics.

Acknowledgements

This research was conducted with the support provided by the Ministry of Innovation and Technology of Hungary from the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund, financed under the ELTE TKP2020-IKA-06 funding scheme.

References

- Ballard, M. (2001). *Le nom propre en traduction*. Paris: Ophrys.
- Bárdosi, V. (2015). *Szólások, közmondások eredete. Frazeológiai etimológiai szótár*. Budapest: Tinta Könyvkiadó.
- Fábián, Zs. (2006a). Gli antroponimi nelle sei traduzioni ungheresi di *Le avventure di Pinocchio* di Carlo Collodi. *Il Nome nel testo*, 8, 355–367.
- Fábián, Zs. (2006b). I toponimi nelle traduzioni ungheresi di Pinocchio. In A. Kollár (Ed.), *Miscellanea di studi in onore di Mária Farkas* (pp. 55–64). Szeged: JATEPress.
- Farkas, T. (2007). A tulajdonnevek fordíthatóságáról és napjaink fordítási hibáiról, közszők és tulajdonnevek példáján. *Névtani Értesítő*, 29, 167–188.
- Farkas, T. (2009). A tulajdonnevek fordításának alapkérdéseiről. *Diadal vagy Viktória, Eugén vagy Jenő? Fordítástudomány*, 11(2), 22–35.
- Farkas, T. (2011). Franciás műveltség, magyar nyelv és a tulajdonnevek fordítása. In G. Csiszér & A. Darvas (Eds.), *Klárások. Tanulmánykötet Korompay Klára tiszteletére* (pp. 109–116). Budapest: ELTE Magyar Nyelvtörténeti, Szociolingvisztikai, Dialektológiai Tanszék.
- J. Soltész, K. (1979). *A tulajdonnév funkciója és jelentése*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
- Mizani, S. (2008). Proper names and translation. *Translation Journal*, 12(3).
<https://translationjournal.net/journal/45proper.htm>
- Moya, V. (2000). *La traducción de los nombres propios*. Madrid: Cátedra.
- Nord, C. (2003). Proper names in translations for children. *Alice in Wonderland as a case in point. Meta: Translators' Journal*, 48(1–2), 182–196. <https://doi.org/10.7202/006966ar>
- Sanaty Pour, B. (2009). How to translate personal names. *Translation Journal*, 13(4).
<https://translationjournal.net/journal/50proper.htm>
- Särkkä, H. (2007). Translation of proper names in non-fiction texts. *Translation Journal*, 11(1). <http://translationjournal.net/journal/39proper.htm>
- Sato, E. (2016). Proper names in translational contexts. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 6(1), 1–10. <http://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.0601.01>
- Slíz, M. (2019). A tulajdonnevek fordítása – funkcionális, névelméleti megközelítésben I. A név jellemzői mint a fordítást befolyásoló tényezők. *Névtani Értesítő*, 41, 13–39.
<https://doi.org/10.29178/NevtErt.2019.1>
- Van Langendonck, W. (2007). *Theory and Typology of Proper Names*. Berlin–New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Vermes, A. P. (2005). *Proper Names in Translation: A Relevance-Theoretic Analysis*. Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Kossuth Egyetemi Kiadó.