



TRANSLATING GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES: PHONETIC VS SEMANTIC TRANSLATION.

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Abstract: *This paper examines the contrast between phonetic and semantic translation in the context of geographical terms by highlighting the need for a balanced approach, linguistic characteristics of the target language.*

Geographical names and have always been very controversial when it came to their translation, to transformations which should be applied and so on. Many translation scholars debated as the names can only be used as a referent or they can be adapted for better intelligibility in the target culture. Because, proper names such as geographical terms, contain semantic, historical, geographical, or even cultural connotations. Some proper names have allusions and omitting such information was deemed unacceptable in translation. Therefore, translation of proper names requires a profound analysis of their meanings, origins, and styles or types of literature these names were used in.

Toponyms are normally transcribed or transliterated: Oxford – Оксфорд, Находка – Nakhodka. These methods are practical if the name only serves as a reference. However, translators consider these terms sometimes challenging when they require the translators to reflect on the cultural and national specific

of the names accurately to preserve the original meaning as much as possible; an error in the translation may lead to inaccuracies and misinformation.

On the one hand, the most typical and customary phonetic transformations used while translating geographical and proper names are transcription, transliteration, calque and omission. They can be applied in different situations and none of them is considered to be universal for the translation of geographical and proper names. As a rule, most English geographical names are translated by way of transcription, e.g., Capetown – Кейптаун, Dundee – Данді, Freetown – Фрітаун, Newfoundland – Ньюфаундленд. But many English proper names are also reproduced by transcription and partly by transliteration. It can be observed in two syllable geographical names, such as Birmingham – Бірмінгем, Brighton – Брайтон. Translators who are favor of phonetic translation emphasize its role in preserving the linguistic and cultural identity of geographical names. By prioritizing the original pronunciation, this method encourages global recognition of the place. For instance, rendering the Chinese name "Beijing" in phonetics preserves its original Mandarin pronunciation, enhancing authenticity and global recognition. In certain situations, translating a term phonetically serves to honor its cultural and historical importance, especially when the name carries deep spiritual or historical connotations. This strategy emphasizes foreignization, allowing the target audience to experience the cultural essence of the term.

On the other hand, some translators critique phonetic translation for potentially problems of the semantic meaning of the name. For example, "Putuo Shan," a Chinese term that means "Putuo Mountain," might be misunderstood as a non-descriptive label without the semantic clarity of its translation. In these cases, the semantic translation strategy will aim to overcome the difficulties. Semantic translation tries to move as closely as possible the semantic and syntactic structures of the target language with the same contextual meaning in the source language text, as well as word meanings and sentence meanings





from the perspective of the source text context. The results of semantic translation are considered to be more flexible and closer to the meaning desired by the target language. When using the semantic translation method, the resulting translation is a flexible and flexible text when compared to other types of translations. Some translators argue that semantic translation is essential for terms with significant cultural or historical importance, as it helps retain the essence of the source language while making it comprehensible to the target audience. For example, Peter Newmark highlights that semantic translation emphasizes cultural accuracy and contextual relevance, which can be crucial for place names tied to local heritage or meaning.

Taking everything into account, both of the translation approaches often depends on the specific goals and the needs of the target audience. Translators frequently use semantic translation to address cultural differences, ensuring that unfamiliar ideas are presented in an understandable way, while phonetic translation aims to preserve the unique identity of placesnames across linguistic boundaries.

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