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The Influence of Turkish Anthroponymy on the Translation of the Novel “100” By Başar Akşan

Abstract

The Turkish anthroponymy, as a product of cultural and linguistic characteristics, portrays the cultural and national identity of its people accurately. If we exclude Arabic and Persian influences and traces in the Turkish onomastics, it can be established that authentic Turkish names mirror the cultural heritage of its nation, putting cultural features of different periods of Turkish history on display. Most of Turkish names stand for any common noun in its unmodified form. Apart from nouns, first and last names can also take the form of different grammatical categories. In order to get the first name, one merely needs to put a capital letter at the beginning of these categories. This linguistic phenomenon can occasionally confuse the translator but it will never cause him to make any crucial errors in the text. However, the nonexistence of grammatical gender in Turkish language, along with the frequent substantivization, can often cause difficulties for translation of texts that contain such names. These difficulties are mostly resolved with the help of context. Nevertheless, there are many situations where it is hard to determine whether a particular name is male or female, which calls for additional effort and research, thus unexpectedly complicating a translator's job. This cultural and linguistic characteristic of the Turkish language, which challenges the readers and translators especially, is one of the main features of the novel “100”, written by Başar Akşan that requires a separate and thorough analysis of its own.

Keywords: Anthroponymy, Turkish, Grammatical Gender, Translation.

Başar Akşan'ın “100” Adlı Romanının Çevirisinde Türk Antroponimi Özelliklerinin Etkisi

Öz

Türk antroponimi kültürel ve linguistik özellikler taşımasının yanında milli kimliğin açık bir ifadesidir. Türk ad bilimini etkileyen Arapça ve Farsça izleri bir tarafa bırakılırsa özgün Türk adlarının farklı tarihi dönemlere ait kültür zenginliğini taşıyarak Türk milletinin geleneksel mirasını yansıttığı görülür. Türkçede yabancı etkilere/kültürlere dayanmadan kurulan kişi adlarında tür adlarının da morfolojik bir değişim geçirmeden kullanılabilir olması çevirilerde sıkıntılara neden olmaktadır. Kişi ad ve soyadları; ad kökenli olmayan diğer sözcük türlerinden de meydana gelebilir. Kişi adlarını belirtmek için söz konusu dilbilgisel birimleri büyük harfle yazmak yeterlidir. Bu durum, tecrübesiz bir çevirmeni yanıltabilmekteyse de yine de büyük bir hata yapmasına yol açmaz. Ancak Türkçede gramatikal cinsiyetin olmaması, metinlerin gramatikal cinsiyet özelliklerine sahip kişi adlarını içeren dillere çevirisinde güçlük yaratabilir. Bu tür güçlükler genellikle metnin bağlam bütünlüğü göz önünde bulundurularak çözülebilir. Buna rağmen, kullanılan kişi adının erkeğe mi yoksa kadına mı ait olduğu konusunda oluşan tereddüt, daha fazla çaba ve araştırma gerektirir. Dolayısıyla çevirinin doğru bir şekilde yapılmasını zorlaştırır. Türkçenin; okurları ve çevirmenleri oldukça ciddi bir zihin karışıklığına iten bu kültürel ve linguistik özelliği, yazar Başar Akşan'ın ‘100’ adlı romanında göze çarpar. Dolayısıyla bu konu; üzerinde özenle çalışılacak bir analiz gerektirir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Antroponimi, Türkçede Gramatikal Cinsiyet, Çeviri.

Characteristics of Turkish Anthroponymy

Anthroponymy, a branch of onomastics, offers priceless information regarding the culture of certain people as well as their history, psychology, religion, and customs. Given names in Turkish language can be observed as a result of an entire cultural heritage of a nation, as it reflects a cultural milieu of different historical periods. Today this milieu includes the earliest periods of civilization and their later developments, the acceptance of Islamic religion, the period of national awakening, and the contemporary moment as a reflection of democracy in all aspects of life.

If we exclude Arabic and Persian names that belong to different language families and have different structure from Turkish language, names of Turkish origin can be divided into the Pre-Islamic period of tribal states and the Contemporary period in which centuries-long influence of Islamic cultures has created contemporary names that express characteristics of Turkish language as well as the consciousness of national affiliations (Aykut 2010: 307).

In Turkish culture, high level of attention has always been dedicated to given names, since the custom of last names had been unknown for a long period.¹

Indigenous Turkish names contain characteristics that are in other languages considered to be a very rare phenomenon. Namely, both morphological and semantic characteristics of Turkish language offer a possibility of almost all word classes (nouns, adjectives, participles, various verb forms and tenses, imperative, gerund, adverbs, postpositions, including exclamation marks, greetings and onomatopoeia) becoming a given name. This is possible thanks to phenomenon substantivization as one of the characteristics of Turkish grammar, which allows different word classes to become real nouns.² Given names allow individuals to express their own desires, attitudes, and aspirations that maintain a true image of cultural and national identity.

1 The law regarding surnames that obligated every citizen to choose a family name was brought in 1934 as part of Atatürk's reforms, which were implemented after the founding of the Republic.

2 To see more about substantivization go to: AYKUT, Ksenija (2011). *Kontrastiranje turskog i srpskog jezika*, Beograd.

It can be said with certainty that Turkish language, with the help of its specific agglutinative structure, offers various possibilities regarding the derivation of given names. One notion can generate a large number of new notions that can then become a given name. This can be achieved by adding different endings to a lexeme, by forming complex verbal structures, or by forming compound words.

When it comes to the lexical aspects, given names can be words that symbolize patriotic feelings, fighting spirit, feelings of national belonging, names of celestial objects, various geographic notions, atmospheric and natural phenomena, different corners of the world, seasons and months, names of different chemical metals, precious metals, names of animals and birds, fruit, flowers and plants, names of colours and their nuances, family relations, names of different professions, common nouns from everyday life, nouns that are used when addressing someone, abstract nouns, sounds and greetings (on the condition that they are written with a capital letter). Toponyms and ethnonyms can also be used as given names. Considering that they are always written with a capital letter and that in their function of given names they preserve their indigenous form without succumbing to any types of modifications, their recognition is made difficult. Incertitude is therefore solved by following the context.

In Turkish language, the majority of given names can also be last names, which often leads to unusual, confusing, and unexpected combinations of given names and last names. In this case, one has to respect the rules of orthography as well as indicate whether they are referring to given names or last names.

Apart from the difficulties that may arise during the differentiation of given names from other nouns and word classes as well as the comprehension of these words, there is another difficulty, perhaps the most challenging one to overcome. Namely, Turkish language does not differentiate between grammatical genders, which makes it difficult to determine the gender of different nouns and makes it almost impossible to respect the principle of male and female names. A large number of names from previously mentioned categories can be both male and female. Lexicographers of personal names are not unique in this regard. Even though the names in these

onomasticons can be divided into male, female, and unisex names, they are never consistent or identical. The decisive role in this instance is played by the parents who are considered to be the carriers of decisions pertaining to the names of their new-born children; however, they are not obliged to follow grammatical rules and language structure pertaining to names and gender. Therefore, historical names of male rulers may also be given to female children. This is not an unusual phenomenon. In order to avoid perplexity over gender, in Turkish language more than in other languages, it is very common to use honorifics such as Mr. and Mrs. when addressing someone or mentioning their given name.

Problems of Translation Related to Anthroponymic Structure

While noting the problem of recognizing given names without the existence of grammatical gender, whether in written or oral form prominent Turkologists observe that "sometimes translators who have poor knowledge of Turkish onomastics can be deceived regarding the gender of one's given name. For example, if they are translating a written text where the name of the protagonist is Deniz, a unisex name, they will then make their first error in translation." (Teodosijević 2004: 16)

Even though Turkish language is considered to be an agglutinative language that is based on suffixation and formation of given names with the help of suffixes, it does not possess gender-related suffixes. Apart from the limited number of nouns that signify one's natural gender, one needs to use specific lexemes when trying to express one's gender as well as one's social status, and they can be located in front of or after the noun depending on the desired context.

Many linguists have noted that difficulties in the process of translation within many social and national communities do not always coincide. They note that "the most common relationship between lexical and grammatical categories is the relationship of partial matching." (Hlebec 1989: 25). While addressing different grammatical categories, the author states that morphological categories such as tenses, aspects,

numbers, genders, cases, modality, and many others exist in various world languages (Hlebec 1989: 29). Turkish language contains all of the previously mentioned grammatical categories with the exception of gender. Hlebec also notes that "problems during translation mainly arise when the gender of the corresponding noun is different than that of the target language and the original language" (Hlebec 1989: 29). The problem becomes even more severe when it is difficult to determine the grammatical gender in the original language. Various other authors mention these difficulties in their analyses of differences between Serbian and English languages, when one's given name cannot positively determine one's gender. They also suggest the use of "titles such as Mr., Mrs., and Ms." (Jovanović 2001: 52-53). If we compare languages from the same language group, then structural and kinship distance as well as linguistic obstacles between Serbian and Turkish are considerably bigger.

Authors also point out that nonexistence of grammatical gender in languages related to Turkish such as Hungarian, does not represent an obstacle to speakers of those languages because new words that refer to one's gender are often introduced into the vocabulary (Tot, 2010). The nonexistence of grammatical gender does not represent an unsolvable problem during the conversation, mutual understanding, and even translation, especially in languages where given names are clearly defined. As of Turkish, this rule applies only until we find ourselves on an uncertain anthroponymic field.

An example that adequately illustrates the problem faced by the translators during their translations of Turkish given names and nicknames is visible in the novel of the Turkish Nobel Prize Winner, Orhan Pamuk, titled *Benim Adım Kırmızı* (My Name is Red). The title of the novel has few different translations in Serbo-Croatian-Bosnian speaking areas. In Croatia and Bosnia, the novel is titled in the feminine form (using the feminine suffix -a) *Zovem se Crvena*³, or My Name is Red, whereas in Serbia it is titled

3 PAMUK, Orhan (2004). *Zovem se Crvena*, Translated by: Ekrem Čaušević and Marta Andrić, Zagreb; PAMUK, Orhan (2007). *Zovem se Crvena*, Translated by: Ismar Rešić, Sarajevo.

in the neuter form *Zovem se Crveno*⁴, or My Name is Red, and in the magazine *The Letter* (Писмо) it is titled in the masculine form *Моје име Црвени*,⁵ or My Name is Red.

This ambiguity is understandable considering that the protagonist of the novel is actually the colour red, which is why the noun is capitalized and treated as a given name. Having this in mind, it is clear that in the process of translating Turkish texts it is necessary to pay special attention to the grammatical category of gender. During the complex process of translation, those writers who with their complex literary works force the translators to undertake bigger efforts in their search for equivalent translations can be very much distinguished. One of them is undoubtedly the contemporary author Başar Akşan.

Analysis of Başar Akşan's Usage of Given Names

Başar Akşan is a contemporary writer who was born and raised in 1960 in Istanbul. He lived for many years in both Europe and the United States. Between the years of 1980 and 1990, Akşan wrote works for literary journals, he published travels and articles pertaining to the theory of music. Soon after this, he started writing novels and would sometimes publish several novels in the course of one year. So far he has published sixteen novels, all of which discuss art, crime, politics, foreign countries, philosophy, and, above all, the modern world that is based on the pursuit of profit.

The most popular motif in his literary work is his analysis of characters from high societies and senior business and financial circles, imbued with the psychological state of economic, banking, and stock market populations of modern societies as well as his philosophical reflection on these phenomena. Perceiving the hidden affairs of financial oligarchy and market speculations, this writer of vanguard novels is considered to be the creator of new literary trends that are based on philosophical

4 ПАМУК, Орхан (2006). *Zovem se Crveno*, Translated by: Ivan Panović, Beograd.

5 Памук, Орхан (2002). „Моје име Црвени“, Translated by: Реџеп Шкријељ, XVIII, no.71: 5-16. *Писмо*, Београд.

analyses as well as the new genre of novel that he refers to as the eco-novel, i.e. the economic novel. (Akşan 2007: 5)

When it comes to anthroponymy, this contemporary writer describes the impersonality of a mechanized world, a world without individuality. Therefore, his characters are given unconventional or non-existent names that may at first seem gender-neutral. His choice of given names is very specific and makes his literary works challenging for any translator, especially if we take into account the already mentioned characteristics of Turkish language and Turkish anthroponymy.

The novel "100" represents psychological decalogue composed of short novels titled Media Obsession, Woman With The Self-Injury Disorder, Obsessive Behavior, Sleepless Nights Until Dawn, Panic Attack, Dissatisfaction, Hedonist, Ambitious Attitudes, 2200 and 105.

Each novel begins with a short quote by Freud, indicating the psychological aspect of the novel. The novels contain multiple concise chapters; however, they do not seem connected on a deeper level. Among themselves, the novels are also not contextually linked. Each of them talks about different characters and their reactions under various circumstances. Therefore, the plot of each novel cannot be followed with continuity, which makes it difficult to determine the gender of the protagonists.

During the decalogue, the author uses different forms of given names. He less often opts for names of Arabic and Persian origin that are gender-oriented. There are four female names that are very frequently used in his novels, including Sebahat, Sevdije, Şule, Hasret, and Dilan, which is used less often. This group also consists of Turkish names that have been derived from the noun "rose" such as Açıngül and Altingül, which are clearly defined female names. Some of the most common male names are mentioned less often, usually once or twice, and are reserved for secondary characters. These are names of Arabic origin such as Celal, Mehmet, Osman, and Metin.

Contrary to all of this, most given names in this novel are indigenous Turkish names, some of which are independent nouns in their nominative form such as Yaşam

(life), Coşku (verve, upswing), Çığ (avalanche), Ödül (reward), Elçim/Elçin (beam). Some names have various morphological suffixes such as Tandan, Cansın, and Doğrul. The largest percentage of names, however, are complex words such as Aytek, Baytok, Çağay, Tanyüz, Temizcan, Özil, Özütok, Özsu, Kayansu, Suay, Süzülay, and Şenyıl.

Certain number of Turkish given names that Akşan uses in his decalogy are registered in popular lexicons and dictionaries, but there are also those that cannot be found in any grammatical reading. As for those names that emerge as already existent names, despite the fact that they are uncommon in colloquial language, there are different explanations about their gender and their meaning. However, the most common remark is that the name is universal for both sexes, which speaks volume to the rarity of their usage as well as the perplexity faced by many lexicographers regarding unisex names. Therefore, explanations of this kind are often unreliable because, at the end of the day, the parents are those who decide upon their child's name. These are the already mentioned names such as Tanyüz, Özil, Özsu, Yaşam, etc.

As it has already been mentioned, perplexity regarding gender in Turkish language is solved by using lexical entries such as Mr., Mrs., man, woman, girl, brother, sister, and others. This lexical and syntactic way of expressing one's gender can compensate for the nonexistence of grammatical gender in Turkish language.

This method is used by Akşan in his novel. He also tends to use common male names as female and vice-versa, which again fits into the category of morphological and semantic characteristics of Turkish onomastics. In this way, he makes it possible for translators to reach accurate conclusions regarding the gender of the protagonists. However, if a translator were to deal with the translation of an entire page, it would then be impossible for him to produce an accurate translation due to the difficulty of determining the gender of the protagonists. In certain parts of the novel, Akşan does not use the usual gender inflections. The conclusion regarding the gender of the protagonists has to be drawn from the context itself. Considering the chapters are very short and that they often contain only a few pages, it is quite common to be unfamiliar

with the gender of the protagonists, even after having read the entire chapter of the novel.

In the second chapter of the novel titled "Futile Waiting," we already begin to notice perplexities regarding grammatical gender and given names. The writer uses the typically female name Şenyıl (Gülçür 2007: 351) as a male name, but this can be determined only after having read other chapters in the novel.

In this chapter Akşan mentions the name Elçim, which some consider to be a female name (Yılmaz 2008: 37). Others consider it to be a universal name (Par 1996: 68); however, the most reliable scientific source does not contain a gender label regarding this particular name. (Aydın 2010: 209). Therefore, it is difficult to conclude the gender of the protagonists, since there are no other gender-related indicators throughout the chapter.

In the fifth chapter of the second novel titled "The Unpleasant Feeling of Abandonment," the writer once again feels the need to emphasize the gender of the name Elçim (or Elçin), even though he had already clarified this name in his previous chapters (49-52). However, if we were to observe the chapter that contains the conversation between the two individuals that are about to separate in an independent manner, then the conventional relationship between these two individuals would be the only cause that would lead us to conclude that Elçim is a female given name.

The seventh and final chapter of the second novel does not contain given names; however, it is an excellent indicator of the situation in which the nonexistence of the grammatical gender prevents complete understanding of the text as well as its accurate translation (56). If we view this chapter in an independent manner and as a separate story, then it is impossible to translate it accurately. Here, unfortunately, neither the instructions nor the solutions regarding text translations that contain inequivalent lexicon in the aspect of significant categories of linguistic translation theories, defined as realization of formal correspondence, are of much help (Sibinović 2009: 128). On the

contrary, we are faced with a hopeless situation that affects both the reader and the translator.

In the first chapter of the third novel, which does not have any specific title, the writer talks about a character named Kayansu; we can reach conclusions regarding her gender solely based on the information that this character buys for herself "a set of dark red lingerie" (60-61).

In a conversation between the two individuals in the first chapter of the fourth novel titled "The Normal External Life", a businessman named Uçman consults his advisor in connection to bank loans. The advisor's name is Orum and since this is the first introduction of this particular character, it is very difficult to conclude throughout the chapter whether Orum is male or female. Only in the second chapter of the novel can we conclude from the context that Orum is a male character (86-87). This is also confirmed by some available sources (*Kişi Adları Sözlüğü* TDK 2015), whereas others do not mention the gender of the character at all (Aydın 2010: 43). However, it is not uncommon in Turkish language to give traditional male names to female children.

Perhaps the most ambiguous part of the decalogue regarding this issue is the first chapter of the fifth novel titled "The Steps That Lead Towards the Lack of Interest." In this short chapter we are introduced to the protagonist named Tanyüz, whom the writer refers to in the third person, and whose gender is very difficult to determine (107-108). In the continuation of the novel, we learn that Tanyüz is a female character and Özütok, who appears in the following chapters, is male. In some rare, but reliable sources, Tanyüz is a universal name (Aydın 2010: 570); or a male name, but with the explanation that says, "that whose face is coloured with the colors of an early dawn, a young girl with rosy cheeks," which creates an even bigger confusion regarding this otherwise insufficiently specified area (Par 1996: 200).

The name Özil is claimed by some to be a male name (Aydın 2010: 455; *Kişi Adları Sözlüğü* TDK 2015) whereas the name Suay is claimed to be either a female or a universal name (*Kişi Adları Sözlüğü* TDK 2015). Both of these names appear in the

seventh novel, and only after a careful reading of each and every chapter can we conclude that Özil is a male name and Suay a female name (149-177).

The final chapter of the novel does not contain a single given name; it only describes the protagonists and their actions. However, considering the nonexistence of the grammatical gender as well as the fact that in the previous chapters we were introduced with numerous important characters, neither the reader nor the translator can know with certitude which character is described in the chapter (177).

The name Yaşam is not mentioned by most sources; however, the online Dictionary of First Names of the Turkish Linguistic Society as well as Par's dictionary (Par 1996: 230) define it as a universal name. The name is used by the author as a male name, which can be concluded only upon reading the entire novel. Therefore, the sixth chapter of the eighth novel can cause both the insecurity and the need to return to the previous chapters in order to make sure that the author is really describing a male character (198).

In the ninth novel the writer decides to make an even more radical and surrealist approach, so he addresses his ninth and tenth novels as well as his entire decalogue in a numerical fashion. In the ninth novel he does not use given names. Instead, he uses initials, which makes the situation regarding the grammatical gender of the protagonists even more complicated (203-227). The very name of the ninth novel 2200 refers to the year 2200, which is evident only from the title of the first chapter, considering that dates in the Turkish language are not ordinal numbers. This is also a phenomenon that makes translation even more complicated and that together with the used initials constitute the indicator of surrealist and futuristic observations of anthroponymy, accordant to the relations between the genders, which is one of the subjects of this novel.

The fifth chapter of the tenth novel titled "Meticulousness and Attention" consists of the dialogue between Nalyat and Hitaf. In the text there is not any indication that would help us to determine the gender of these two characters (244-245). The

additional difficulty in this chapter is the fact that these names cannot be found in any dictionaries, lexicons, official name lists, or in any other available sources.

The usage of different names without any specifications of the grammatical gender in this novel shows that a large chunk of the novel must be read in order to determine with certitude the grammatical gender of the protagonists, and in that way translate the novel adequately and accurately into Serbian language. This also obliges both the reader and especially the translator who, if he is not a native speaker of Turkish language or if he is not well familiar with the linguistic reality of Turkish language, which is common among Serbian translators who specialize in Turkish, to read most of the chapters in the novel, if not the entire novel, in order to translate it with accuracy.

At the same time, the whole atmosphere of the work, its surrealistic and futuristic nature, its reference to Freudian analyses and attitudes, its usage of given names and initials that make one's understanding of the text more difficult as well as the impression that there is a tendency of overcoming the individuality, requires the utmost attention from the translator, especially regarding his research and usage of available sources that, unfortunately, do not always produce reliable solutions in the field of anthroponymy; therefore, it is necessary to shape the translation of the novel according to its context and its integral work of the decalogue.

The names that are represented in the novel can be divided into well-known names, names of Arabic origin where there is no so misunderstanding regarding the grammatical and natural gender; however, these names are mentioned in very small numbers. Then, there are Turkish names that do not have a gender label; however, one can make a conclusion regarding their gender based on their frequent usage in everyday life, which puts them into the category of well-known names. Finally, there are Turkish names that are used in very small numbers and that may confuse the reader and lead him to believe that the writer is using the phonetic set of Turkish language in order to derive new given names whose meaning and gender either have different explanations in various sources or do not have any available explanation at all, which allows the reader

to have different interpretations of the novel, as long as their interpretations are not determined by words that belong to one of the gender inflections.

Generally speaking, we cannot escape the impression that the author in his sometimes surrealistic work, (un)intentionally coins with linguistic characteristic pertaining to the grammatical gender, which leaves both the reader and the translator in the state of perplexity.

The decalogue, as a result of psychological research, contains certain futuristic aspects that can explain the tendency to try and create neologisms, which are otherwise present in Turkish language as well as in the field of anthroponymy, in the form of devising new names, which is not an unusual phenomenon. The novel represents the proof that Turkish language is suitable for creation of new word combinations and formation of lexemes that can produce new, and until now unheard of, given names.

Conclusion

Whether the theme that we have discussed in this scientific paper is topical is shown by the fact that besides the scientific onomasticons, there is a large number of lexicons and dictionaries of given names that can help the parents when it comes to choosing the name for their newborn. As some of these sources regarding the meaning or the gender of the names as well as their etymology cannot be considered to be completely reliable, the Turkish Linguistic Society felt the need to, apart from all the other scientific dictionaries that they have published, start with the preparation of the Dictionary of First Names. Bearing in mind all the previously mentioned characteristics of Turkish anthroponymy, the conception of this dictionary is quite different to all the previous editions that have been published by this prestigious language institution. Namely, the dictionary, while in its preparational phase, was posted on the official website of this benchmark institution, allowing for the possibility of entering relevant, scientific, and practical suggestions in the process of forming one of the most comprehensive and well-rounded dictionaries in the field of Turkish anthroponymy.

When we take into consideration all the previously mentioned characteristics of the Turkish onomasticon as well as the number of names it contains, we can say with certitude that the Turkish onomasticon is almost unlimited. A large number of lexemes allows us to form a very long list of compounds and derivatives with the help of various derivational suffixes. If we also take into consideration the fact that from the 1980s to the present day around thirty onomasticons have been published, some by public institutions and others by the researchers who specialize in onomastics as well as the fact that the vast majority of names are not repeated in these onomasticons and that some of them contain up to few thousand names, we can conclude with certainty that Turkish language is one of the rare languages where the possibility for the derivation of given names is the most expressed. This represents a particular challenge when it comes to the exploration of their characteristics as well as the transition and the translation of these given names into other languages.

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