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Adaptation of foreign words into Czech: the case of Icelandic proper names

1 Introduction

Czech is a highly inflectional language, and the adaptation of foreign linguistic elements into Czech can pose interesting challenges to translators and to language management in general – a situation not unlike that of Icelandic.

The language policy of a nation mirrors both its history and its contemporary social and political situation, and since the aim of this article is to describe the way in which foreign words are rendered in Czech, it is necessary to provide an historical overview of the Czech language with the focus on the transcription and declension of foreign words in general (Chapter 2).

In Chapter 3, the current state of rendering foreign words in Czech – i.e. both loanwords in general and proper names in particular – is described, as well as how this has developed.

In Chapter 4, an attempt is made at reviewing the situation as concerns words from the foreign language in focus here, i.e. from Icelandic. I also provide a short review of translation practices from Old Norse into Czech, while a much more detailed account of that topic is to be found in a recent article, Novotná & Starý (2014).

Different characteristics of the original and the target language cause specific problems in translations. When using Icelandic and Old Norse words in Czech, the following questions arise concerning

loanwords and transcription, and grammatical treatment of foreign proper names: should one adapt the text as much as possible for the reader and use only a form that is familiar to him or her, or should one also introduce foreign, “exotic” aspects, for example the original letters of proper names in the transcription? Should one write *Olafs-fjord*, *Ólafsfjord*, or *Ólafsfjörður*? Is one allowed to alter the nominative singular by omitting the original masculine ending, although the basic form is important, for example, for search in indexes and vocabularies? Should one keep the nominative form as it is in the original language as the basis for declension, and add an inflectional ending from the target language to a form which is not originally the stem of the word (e.g. nom. *Grímur*, gen. *Grímura*)?

Rendering foreign words is only one issue in the complex set of problems in any translation process. However, it has to be solved by every translator, and the case of translations into Czech could well illustrate some problems that speakers of other richly inflected languages also encounter when they are translating Icelandic literature.

2 On the history of the Czech language

2.1 A short description of Czech

With a little less than 10 million native speakers, the Czech speech community is a relatively small one. Czech belongs to the Western branch of the Slavic language family and it has a long tradition of literature and scholarship. The territory of the Czech language coincides today with the present-day Czech Republic, but up to the end of World War II, extensive border areas were German speaking. According to the 2001 census, people who declare Czech as their “mother tongue” (the term used in the census) amount to 9,707,397, i.e., 94.9% of the population of the Czech Republic.

Czech has a rich inflection system (e.g., seven cases, three genders). As the syntactic relations within clauses are made explicit by rich inflection and extensive morphosyntactic congruence, the word order is fairly flexible. Word order variation renders the information structure: the background information is usually in the front, while the new or most important information comes towards the end of sentences. Czech uses the Latin alphabet, augmented by three diacritics, as in the letters *á*, *ř* and *ů*.

Similar to many other continental languages, corpus planning has traditionally been strongly developed at the governmental level, and this feature keeps Czech at variance with English, where corpus planning has remained at the outskirts of public concern with language. Contemporary Czech has been developing in contact with other European languages, but although its vocabulary used to be influenced by German, it has not been unilaterally dependent on German or any other single language. Presently, Czech is not characterized by strong purism (Neustupný & Nekvapil 2006:7).

2.2 An historical overview of the transcription and rendering of foreign words in Czech

2.2.1 The Middle Ages

Meyerstein (1973:42) says that the “first Slavic literary language was the result of very careful planning. Orthodox missionary Methodius (826–885) took the Macedonian dialect he knew, enriched its lexicon, and endowed it with complicated sentence structure under the influence of his native Greek. He also provided it with an orthography which he devised on the basis of the small letters of the Greek alphabet”. The second graphisation of Czech, which has prevailed until now, was based on the Latin alphabet and was under Western influence. As in other languages which were written down for the first time by Latin writing scholars, one of the first problems to solve was how to write Czech proper names in a Latin document.

The first continuous texts in Czech date back to the 13th century (Nestupný & Nekvapil 2006:61); their vocabulary contained both words inherited from Old Church Slavic and loans from Latin, as the switch to the Roman church and to Latin had not eliminated the Old Church Slavic vocabulary, with religious terms prevailing in particular (cf. Meyerstein 1973:42). Towards the end of the 14th century, “Czech was a stylistically highly elaborated language which had penetrated to the domains of administration and ideology. Spelling was relatively fixed” (Nestupný & Nekvapil 2006:61).

The Czech tradition of language codification goes back to the early fifteenth-century tract *De orthographia Bohemica*, written by the religious reformer Jan Hus, who proposed replacing cluster spelling with a diacritical system (Nestupný & Nekvapil 2006:62). This led subse-

quently to a system of marking the length of vowels (*á, é, í, ó, ú, ů, ý*) as well as the palatalization of vowels and consonants (*č, d', ě, ň, ř, š, t', ž*), which has influenced the spelling of numerous other languages.

2.2.2 The Austrian period

As Meyerstein (1973:43) points out, the period of humanism “undid much of Hus’ efforts. Czech writers, most notably Comenius (1592–1670), did not only fail to avoid but often welcomed foreign words”. In 1620, the Czech nobility lost a major battle to the Habsburgs, and protestant scholars had to leave the country (Nestupný & Nekvapil 2006:62). “Czech was used only in the countryside and among the lower class” (Meyerstein 1973: 43). “Literature was limited to works with religious or practical content. In the end, the language found itself largely removed from schools, the sciences, the humanities, law and administration. Norms of language suffered” (Nestupný & Nekvapil 2006:62). Even if Czech was

used, to a certain extent, in written documents within the administrative domain [...] nearly two centuries of this development meant that written Czech diverged widely from the language of the previous period; it was underdeveloped in many respects and could not easily serve either as a national symbol or as the tool of communication in a society aspiring to enter the age of modernisation. The language of the nobility and of many cities and towns was German, without reference to whether the people concerned were of German or of Czech origin. (Nestupný & Nekvapil 2006:63)

2.2.3 The national movement and its impact on Modern Czech

At the end of the 18th century, the national movement slowly commenced. In the beginning, scholars selected Renaissance Czech as the “national symbol” (particularly the language of the humanist Jan Blahoslav and his followers, who had translated the Old Testament into the Kralice Bible in 1588 (Meyerstein 1973:43)), which was not identical with the common language.

This act has had consequences up until the present day that are also of importance for our main topic here, i.e. for the rendering of foreign words. Between the Renaissance period and the late 18th cen-

ture, the spoken language underwent changes which have prevailed until today in the colloquial (“Common”) language variety, as opposed to Standard Czech. The two varieties differ significantly with respect to morphology and syntax. Only Standard Czech is taught in schools, and considerable emphasis is put on correct spelling. From this point of view, the tradition of constant and strict codifying – also evident in the latest proposal on the treatment of Old Norse names (Novotná & Starý 2014) – might be understood.

In the 19th century, new grammars and a dictionary were published along with the first original writings and the first translations into Czech. New words were created, most notably in the field of scientific terminologies. Czech was granted equal status to German, which resulted in Czech being widely introduced in the high schools and in the Czech part of Prague University.

The last third of the 19th century was dominated by purists attempting to rid the language of real or putative foreignisms, with limited impact (Meyerstein 1973:44). Anti-German purism was embodied in handbooks of correct Czech usage, mainly the *Brus jazyka českého* [Sharpener of the Czech Tongue], a predecessor of *Pravidla českého pravopisu = Rules of Czech Spelling* (see below) (Nestupný & Nekvapil 2006:66).

2.2.4 The 20th century

The first *Rules of Czech Spelling*, ed. by Gebauer et al. in 1902, were conservative, referring to the 19th and 18th century literature. Common speakers generally refused to apply these spelling and grammar rules, and in the 1930s, they were totally rejected theoretically by the Prague Linguistic Circle (Nestupný & Nekvapil 2006:66).

By this time [i.e., during the German occupation in World War II], the Czech language was already fully developed and codified, so that it was both structurally and attitudinally resistant to German. [...] Linguistically there was no impact extending beyond the period itself. However, for at least two decades, Czechs developed a distaste for German even in simple management (Cizí slova, 1971: 14). After WWII, the Institute of the Czech Language [...] was created in 1946 as the first institution in the country to monitor Czech and to contribute to its management. The Institute operates a language consulting service. (Nestupný & Nekvapil 2006:67)

In Czechoslovakia under Communist Party rule, no need was seen for major changes, in the name of “democratization” of language (i.e., referring to language as common property of all people – in particular the working class). In the sphere of loanwords,

the contribution of Russian has been meagre [...] even in areas such as military terminology, where more loanwords might be expected. On the contrary, although the official attitude was hostile, as early as the 1960s one could see many loans from English, in particular in the registers of pop-music, sport and (later) computing. (Nestupný & Nekvapil 2006:67)

3 Organized language management concerning foreign words in Czech

3.1 General remarks

Czech does not easily accept loanwords. This is due to its typological profile, rather than to purist language policies (Nestupný & Nekvapil 2006:66). For political and geographical reasons, the Czech language has had the most intensive contact with German. The two languages even share some features (the structure of the lexicon and phraseology), although they belong to different branches of the Indo-European family. However, in Standard Czech, most of the direct borrowings from German were replaced by Czech words during a wave of purism in the 19th century.

Since WWI, there has been no such “hunt” against loanwords as, for example, in Icelandic. There are many loans and, in particular, there is no hesitation in accepting them if they are based on the Greek or Latin lexical tradition. This was proven in *Cizí slova v českém jazyce* [Loanwords in Czech] (1971), a comprehensive research survey asking how Czechs used loanwords and what their attitude towards them was. Most respondents found that loanwords were used too much in the mass media, although they tolerated their presence in scientific literature. 60 percent approved of the use of words originating from Latin and Greek. Most respondents believed that borrowings were an inevitable, though negative, phenomenon, and almost all of them believed that replacing the existing borrowings with new domestic words would not bring any benefit (*Cizí slova v českém jazyce* 1971:23).

3.2 The journal *Naše řeč* [Our Language]

In order to follow the evolution of academic views on foreign words, the Czech Academy journal *Naše řeč* [Our Language], published since 1917, might be of interest. Originally, it had as its purpose “educating people about their language” (Meyerstein 1973:44) and up to today, almost every issue of *Naše řeč* “discusses the correctness of loan words or loan translations” (op. cit.).

Present guidelines include such questions as the following: Is the borrowed word established in usage? Is it appropriate in its particular discourse? Is it easy to replace – for *weekend* and *smog*, for instance, the answer would be no. Is the borrowing correctly formed according to the rules of Czech derivation? Current preoccupation no longer focuses on Germanisms but on the flood of loans from all kinds of languages into styles ranging from technical to professional slang, and from entertainment such as sports or modern music to everyday speech.

The issue of language survival has disappeared and, with it, the need for language planning in a defensive sense. (Meyerstein 1973:44)

3.3 Rules of Czech Spelling

3.3.1 The first editions

The handbook *Rules of Czech Spelling* is “[b]y far the most influential instrument of language management with regard to spelling” (Neustupný & Nekvapil 2006:82). It contains not only an orthographic but also a morphological part. As mentioned in section 2.2.4 above, the first *Rules* were published in 1902, and they are revised every now and then. The dates of the more substantial revisions are 1913, 1941, 1957 and 1993. Let us look at what the different revisions represent regarding the questions of transcription and declension of foreign words.

In the *Rules* from 1913, the transcription of foreign words is not mentioned at all. The section “How to decline foreign names” (*Rules* 1913:22–) states that they are partially to be declined and partially not. Furthermore, it says that Slavic names should always follow one

of the Czech noun paradigms. In non-Slavic names, Czech habits developed under the influence of foreign grammars should be taken into consideration: Old Greek and Latin names respect the stem and the gender of their original grammars (*Troja*, gen. *Troje*; *Pythagoras*, gen. *Pythagory*; *Cicero*, gen. *Cicerona*; *Paris*, gen. *Parida*). In the case of names originating from other languages, the end vowel or consonant that is heard in Czech pronunciation determines which Czech paradigm should be followed and alternatives are sometimes allowed (gen. *Descarta* or *Descartesa*). To the geographical names that are in their original language in the plural, Czech singular endings are usually added (gen. *Nordhausenu*, *Toursu*), even if in only a few cases plural endings are used (*Brémy* ‘Bremen’). The *Rules* state that foreign names very often remain without declension (*Bordeaux*, *Waterloo*, *Peru*, *Anjou*, *Canterbury*, *Dumas*) – probably because there is no evident paradigm in the Czech system which could be followed.

3.3.2 *Rules of Czech Spelling 1941*

The *Rules* from 1941 are more voluminous and, in the chapter on foreign words, they also add a passage on the transcription of personal names and place names (*Rules* 1941:13–). Original spelling should generally be retained (*Apenniny*, *Kordillery*, *Achilles*), although with some exceptions: 1) double consonants are omitted (*Brusel*); 2) symbols and groups of symbols that are unfamiliar in Czech should be changed (*Egypt*, *Ezop* ‘Aesop’); and 3) pronounced length should be marked (*Homér*, *Athény*, *Kréta*). The most frequent names have a Czechisized form (*Londýn*, *Řím*, *Paříž*, *Mojžíš*).

For the transcription of common words of foreign origin, the same rules are applied for frequently used words: 1) *imunita*; 2) *sféra*, *katar*; 3) *estráda*, *majonéza*, *rubín*; while the rarer ones retain their original spelling: 1) *immorální*; 2) *oenologie*, *diphthong*; 3) *adagio*, *angina*. Sometimes two variants are allowed: *passioní* or *pasivní*, *methoda* or *metoda*.

In the passage covering the declension of foreign names, the same principles as in *Rules* 1913 are repeated, but more variants are allowed (*Hugo* – gen. *Huga* or *Hugy*). A general rule – mentioned at the end of this section – says: “we decline everything, that is, by habit, already declined or what is possible to decline” (*Rules* 1941:35); the rest remains without declension.

3.3.3 Rules of Czech Spelling 1957

The *Rules of Czech Spelling*, introduced in 1957, brought the spelling of foreign words closer to their pronunciation, though only for those words that were used by a limited number of people, strictly scientific words, expressions from literary language and words that relate only to phenomena from the country of their origin (e.g. *abbé*, *amenorrhoea*, *rendez-vous*, *vaudeville* etc.). There is also a group of words written in the original way, because their pronunciation differs significantly from their written form, and the Czech transcription would be “very unusual” (*Rules* 1957:45). Most loanwords, including current scientific terms, are then adapted to Czech following these principles: *ae*, *oe* pronounced as [e], [e:] should be written as such (*sféra*, *enologie*), *c* as [k] (*abstraktum*), *y* as [j] (*tramvaj*), *gu* as [gv] (*lingvista*), *rh* as [r] (*rapsódie*), *th* in Greek words as [t] (*antropolog*); double consonants are omitted (*tenis*, *alergie*) and pronounced length is usually marked (*akvárium*, *limonáda*) even if not always (*lokomotiva*, *kultura*). A special problem that continued to develop was the use of *s* where it is pronounced as [z]: in some words, only the variant that is phonetically closer was allowed (*bazén*); in most cases doublets were allowed (*iluze* or *iluse*, *izolace* or *isolace*), while in some classical words the *s* was accepted (*impresionismus*, *president*, *filosofie*). Russian words should also be written according to their Czech spelling (*kombajn*), as should some of French or English origin (*atašé*, *biftek*, *bujón*, *dispečer*, *donchuán*, *gauč*, *kečup* etc.). The original spelling is usually retained as concerns *x* (*index*) and other graphemes not occurring in originally Czech words at all. Further, the original spelling is retained in writing *y/i* (*gymnasium*, *gigant*, *dynastie*, *diktát*) – even if it collides with the general Czech rules for using *y/i*, and in prefixes (*absence*, *subtilní*). Nevertheless, the final statement in the chapter expresses a tolerant attitude towards the transcription of loanwords, as each case may depend on the purpose of each particular text; i.e., the same term might be written differently in a strictly scientific article than in a popularized text (*Rules* 1957:51).

In the paragraph on proper names it is mentioned that in cases of famous personalities, the first name – and sometimes also the second name – is written in an adapted form (*Kryštof Kolumbus*, *Jan Kalvín*, *Vilém Tell*, *Ludvík XIV*). For the first time in its history, this version of *Rules* also mentions the transliteration and transcription principles for languages not using the Latin alphabet: rules introduced by specialists should be followed and their main principle is to suggest a

pronunciation similar to that of Czech letters (*Puškin, Ho Či Min, Mao Ce-tung*). A special table of transcription from Russian was provided in *Rules*.

In the chapter on geographic names, a principle that concerns Icelandic names is also mentioned: if the usage of letters not occurring in the Czech alphabet causes technical problems, the letter, without a special sign, could be used (*Besancon, Nimes*) as well as a letter expressing the closest pronunciation. (Even if not mentioned concretely, this was the reason why translators from Icelandic and Old Norse used *t* or *th* instead of *þ*, and *d* instead of *ð*, see below.) At the end, a voluminous list of localized place names is given (e.g. *Kostnice* 'Konstanz', *Rýn* 'Rhein', *Curych* 'Zürich', *Švédsko* 'Sweden') (*Rules* 1957:53). As to the question of declension, the *Rules* from 1957 do not substantially differ from the earlier *Rules*.

3.3.4 *Rules of Czech Spelling 1993*

According to Neustupný & Nekvapil (2006) the "first post-Communist *Rules* of 1993 proposed only a few changes, but these were welcomed in a very critical fashion. This critical tone was partly the consequence of the fact that this was the first time in the second half of the 20th century when the public could freely express their opinions" (2006:84). Neustupný & Nekvapil (2006) state that

at least two important themes surfaced in the discussion. First, the principle of integration of loanwords into the Czech phonemic system was attacked. The reason was the newly perceived need to retain uniformity with western European languages. [...] The second theme in the discussion concerned the attempt by the authors of the 1993 *Rules* to make the handbook easier to use for the 'average user' by excluding some of the more difficult alternative spellings [...] (Neustupný & Nekvapil 2006:84)

This was strongly criticized, as the general attitude was to require more freedom for the powerful, in this case the middle class, and defend the variation against uniformity which might be desired by the socially weaker classes. This stand "was further influenced by the penetration of new, postmodern, attitudes that placed variation at the top of socio-cultural values" (2006:85). The handbook was actually introduced into schools in 1994, with the proviso that alternative spellings were allowed (2006:85), and this principle has been used in later

publications: the *Akademický slovník cizích slov* [Academic Dictionary of Foreign Words] (1995), or *Slovník spisovné češtiny pro školu a veřejnost* [Dictionary of Standard Czech for the School and the Public] (1994).

3.4 Current situation

The latest codifying publication is the *Akademická příručka českého jazyka* [Academic Handbook of the Czech Language], published in 2014. In Paragraph 6, concerning the adaptation of foreign words into Czech, proper names included, we can read the following general rules: The way in which borrowings are written depends mainly on the frequency of their usage – the original way of writing is retained in words which are rare or are fixed phrases from Latin or other languages (*ad hoc*, *curriculum vitae*, *pour féliciter*), words that are strictly technical, scholarly terms (*brutto*, *allegro*, *leasing*), international units (*joule*, *watt*), and words that relate to the country of their origin (*greenhorn*, *yeti*, *lunch*). One also finds the same principle as is mentioned for the first time in *Rules 1957* (see above): there is a group of words that are written as in the original language, even if these are common words, because – to a native Czech – their pronunciation is very different from their written form (*bulletin*, *interview*, *outsider*, *revue*, *baseball*, *dealer*, *leasing*, *hat-trick*), i.e., any changes, if adopting the Czech transcription, would be too extensive (*Akademická příručka českého jazyka* 2014:54).

The process of adapting the written form is described in the handbook as a long, gradual (*basin* – *basén* – *bazén*) and complicated one, where a lot of factors play a role. Apart from the frequency of a particular word, there are also the lexical and morphological features, similarity with domestic words and their domains of usage. Examples of recently adapted words, where two ways of writing still exist, include the following: *business* – *byznys*, *briefing* – *brífink*, *break* – *brejk*, *manager* – *manažer*.

In contrast to these cases, where the language publications just codify an existing state, scientific terms constitute a special case since the decision on their written form is made by a particular authority. E.g. the International Society for Theoretical and Applied Chemistry decided in 1960 that *oxid* is to be written with an *i* (in contrast to *oxyd* which is how the spelling was earlier, since *y* is the regular letter after *x* in Czech). This is an analogy to *chlorid*, *bromid*. In the first part of the word, however, the *y* is retained (*oxygen*).

4 Rendering Icelandic words in Czech

4.1 Loanwords

It has been illustrated in Chapters 2 and 3 above how the process of adapting loanwords to Czech has developed and continues to develop.

A few Icelandic and Old Norse borrowings have become part of the Czech language. The same principles, as those mentioned above, are used in the adaptation of their written form: if frequently used, they are spelled in the domestic way (*viking*, *vikinský*, *berserk*, *gejzír*, *fjord*, *skald*, *skaldský*, *valkýra*, *jarl*); if new or describing a phenomenon occurring only in Scandinavia, they are written in the original way (*þurs*, *skrælingové*). The general rules described above (in section 3.3) can be observed also for Icelandic words and names. For example, the spelling of the words *viking*, *skald* and *valkýra* has been adapted to Czech pronunciation since the 1960s; in a collection of family sagas translated at that time (*Staroislandské ságy* 1965) these words are spelled *viking*, *skáld* and *valkyrje*. And the word *troll* is an example of word-integration in progress: it is still codified with double *ll* but it is more and more often written with a single *l*, and this will probably soon be accepted by the Czech rules too.

A difficult problem is posed by compounds of established loanwords and names, for example *fjord*. Since the geographic phenomenon is called a *fjord* in Czech, myself and Starý decided to use the Czech form also in cases where it is included as part of a compound, i.e., to write *Skagafjord* and not *Skagafjörðr* (Novotná & Starý 2014:227).

4.2 Transcription and declension of Icelandic proper names

4.2.1 Theoretical background

The pronunciation and declension of Icelandic proper names is, understandably, not much described in general Czech language handbooks. Nevertheless, there are some Czech linguistic publications that discuss this problem theoretically. In a general publication on the pronunciation of foreign names in Czech (VŠČ 2) there are two paragraphs on the pronunciation of Icelandic personal names and place names. It is claimed – without any normative desire – that Czech

uses the sounds from the more-known languages to pronounce Icelandic graphemes (*ö*), and that *þ*, *ð* are usually pronounced differently to how they sound in the original language. Much more detail can be found in Zeman (2000), an overview of how foreign personal names are pronounced and declined in Czech texts. The second part of the overview is entirely dedicated to the Nordic languages, and they all belong to the so-called third group of languages. This means that personal names from these languages do not occur in the mass media very often, just a few times a month. The usual pronunciation is reviewed, but also our main topic, i.e., the declension of Icelandic personal names, is described on three pages. Zeman (2000) states that masculine names which end in the nominative with a consonant (*Halldór*, *Gröndal*) are declined as the Czech paradigm *pán* (gen. *Halldóra*, *Gröndala*). If the nom. ending is *-ur* (*Grímur*), in oblique cases it either falls off (gen. *Gríma*) or it is retained (gen. *Grímura*), and the latter possibility is said to be the more common solution (Zeman 2000:60).

There is no list of Zeman's (2000) sources from which he made this conclusion, but my own research shows that his statement is not valid for prose translations from Icelandic and there is an increasing majority of books where the Czech oblique cases are formed without the Icelandic nominative ending *-ur*. A reason for that might be that Zeman (2000) is focusing on mass media where the majority of authors – in contrast to all translators – are not familiar with Icelandic grammar and therefore do not know that there is a nominative masculine ending and, consequently, they handle the whole name as if it were a stem.

Zeman (2000) further states that possessive adjectives (“*Gríms*”) are formed partly with the masc. nom. ending (*Grímurův*) and partly without it (*Grímův*). If personal names end in an *-s* (*Jónas*), they are declined according to another paradigm (*muž*). If they end in *-i* (*Indridi*), Czech declension follows the pronominal endings.

As to feminine names, those with the ending *-a* naturally follow the Czech paradigm *žena*. Those ending in a consonant (*Gudbjörg*) are, according to Zeman (2000), not declined at all, except in some literary works (*Gudbjörgy*). The possessive adjective then fluctuates between *Gudbjörgin/Gudbjöržin*. One sometimes adds the possessive ending *-ová* – typical in Czech female surnames – to feminine patronyms (*Svava Jakobsdóttirová*), and this enables declension. In a few poetic texts, this ending replaces the second part of the name *-dóttir*

completely (*Svava Jakobova*). Zeman (2000) further states that in scholarly texts, the original form is usually retained.

4.2.2 Translation practices

The main questions that every translator from Icelandic to Czech has to face in this regard are: Should the specific Icelandic graphemes be used, or replaced, and how? Should the nom. masc. ending be retained in the nominative and in the oblique cases, respectively? Should the Czech possessive ending *-ová* be added to the feminine patronymics?

In modern Icelandic literature, there occur substantially fewer names than in Old Norse, and that is why we do not always find examples of each phenomenon in every translated book, as in some of them, there are not enough personal names and place names to answer all of these questions.

Let us look at how proper names and place names are rendered in selected modern Icelandic prose translations into Czech, listed according to the year of publication (translations that were made via another language, and therefore by translators not knowing Icelandic, are not included):

- Halldór Laxness: *Atomová stanice (Atómstöðin)*. 1957. Trans. J. Rak

Nom. masc. endings in nom. retained, also in *-ll*, *-nn*, Icelandic graphemes not used, *Th* (not *T* as in most translations) used instead of *P*.

Examples: *Arngrímur*, dat. *Eystridalu*, *Skarphédinn*, *Eiríksjökull*, *Thórdur*, *Skólavörðustígur*, *Austurvöllur*

- Halldór Laxness: *Salka Valka (Salka Valka)*. 1964. Trans. J. Vrtišová

Nom. masc. endings retained also in oblique cases, Icelandic graphemes not used, the only case of Czech possessive feminine suffix *-ová* instead of *-dóttir*.

Examples: *Salvör Valgerdur*, “*jmenuji se jen po mamince, Jónová*” (“I am called only by my mother’s name, Jónová”, p. 72), *Steinthór*, *Eyjólfur*, *Arnaldura*, *Kristófer Torfdal*, *Jörundur Hundadagakóngur*, *Ángantýr*, *Ángantýre*

- Halldór Laxness: *Rybí koncert (Brekukotsannáll)*. 1978. Trans. H. Kadečková

Nom. masc. endings in nom. retained, in oblique cases omitted, Icelandic graphemes used.

Examples: *Guðmunda, Jóna, Grímur, Gríma, Þórður, Þórða, Ingólfa Arnarsona, Breiðifjorðanem, Úlfarovi, Snorrim, v Borgarfjorðu, z Húsa-fellu, Magnús Stephensen, Jóhann, Jóhanna, Garðar, Garðara*

- Frída Á. Sigurdardóttir: *Zatímco plyne noc (Meðan nóttin líður)*. 1997. Trans. H. Kadečková

Nom. masc. endings in nom. and oblique cases omitted, Icelandic graphemes not used.

Examples: *Eirík, Eiríka, Tórdís, Haldór*

- Einar Már Gudmundsson: *Andělé všehomíra (Englar alheimsins)*. 2000. Trans. Olga Maria Franzdóttir

Nom. masc. endings in nom. retained, in oblique cases omitted, Icelandic graphemes not used.

Examples: *Vilhjálmur, Vilhjálma, Eysteinn, Gudmundson*

- Ólafur Gunnarsson: *Trolí katedrála (Tröllakirkja)*. 2008. Trans. M. Bartošková

Nom. masc. endings in nom. and in oblique cases retained, Icelandic graphemes used.

Examples: *Leifura, Þórarinn, Þórarinne, Guðbrandura*

- Jón Kalman Stefánsson: *Letní světlo, a pak přijde noc (Sumarljós, og svo kemur nóttin)*. 2009. Trans. H. Kadečková

Nom. masc. endings in nom. retained, Icelandic graphemes not used, *Th* (not *T* as in most translations) used instead of *P*.

Examples: *Thorgrímur, Björgvin, Thuríd*

- Halldór Laxness: *Křesťansví pod ledovcem (Kristnihald undir Jökli)*. 2011. Trans. H. Kadečková

Nom. masc. endings in nom. retained, Icelandic graphemes not used.

Examples: *Slečna Hnalltóra, z Hafnarfjorðu, Tórgunna, Gudmundur*

- Jón Kalman Stefánsson: *Ráj a peklo (Himnaríki og helvíti)*. 2012. Trans. M. Bartošková

Nom. masc. endings in nom. retained, in oblique cases omitted, Icelandic graphemes not used.

Examples: *Bárdur, Bárða, Einar, Gvendur, Gudmundur*

- Auður Ava Ólafsdóttir: *Výhonek osmilisté rúže (Afleggjarinn)*. 2012. Trans. H. Kadečková

Nom. masc. endings in nom. omitted, Icelandic graphemes used.

Examples: *Pröst, Þórgunn*

We can see that hardly any rules in rendering proper and place names can be found in Czech translations of modern Icelandic literature. Differences occur not only between translators; the same translator may also change her/his own practice in different translations (Kadečková, Bartošková). If one – in spite of these difficulties – tries to trace some trends, one can state the following:

1. Acute accents are always retained. These are present in the Czech alphabet, although marking only the length, not diphthongs as in Modern Icelandic.
2. If the Icelandic graphemes are replaced, most translators use *t* for *þ* (just in two cases *th* is used) while *ð* is always transcribed as *d*.
3. The growing technical possibilities have enabled an increased use of Icelandic graphemes, which is an approach that respects the source language better on the one hand, but on the other hand it is a marked one, as it clearly indicates the individual translator's presumption that foreign forms do not bother readers, i.e.; that an "exotic" aspect is a positive one.
4. In the majority of contemporary translations, the Icelandic masc. nom. ending is omitted in oblique cases, while it is retained in the nominative.

As far as I know, there has not been made any attempt by Czech translators from Modern Icelandic to create any consensus on the matter of rendering proper names. One of the reasons why translators of modern literature do not see this as a problem as much as translators of Old Norse literature do (cf. Novotná & Starý 2014) is probably the fact that names do not have any strong correlation, either in other literary works or in historiography. With the main focus on the artistic message, identification of a name is generally not important – although a geographical one would sometimes be possible.

4.3 Transcription and declension of Old Norse proper names

The problems of transcription of Old Norse proper names, as well as the grammatical problems, have recently been described theoretically by Novotná & Starý (2014), where all pros and cons of each possible solution have been listed, and in every question, one solution has been chosen. For Old Norse masculine names, we (Novotná & Starý 2014) decided to use the nominative without nominative ending as the basis for Czech declension, in order to prevent creation of forms where the Old Norse endings would be combined with Czech endings of oblique cases (*Grettirovi, Oláfrova* etc.) – this is generally what Czech users without any knowledge of Old Norse grammar tend to invent. The same principle can be used for female names, where the change to the stem occurs, causing the gen. of *Gunnlǫð* to become *Gunnlaðar* and gen. of *Ǫgn* to become *Agnar*. By deciding not to adopt the ‘harsh’ solution that has been practiced in Czech classical philology for many years, that is to keep the original nominative forms and to create oblique cases by adding Czech endings to the original stem (nom. *Ceres*, gen. *Cerery*; nom. *Zeus*, gen. *Dia*), we wished to prevent the risk that a Czech reader would not be able to identify the nominative (*Ǫgn*) with oblique cases (*Agný, Agně*) in his or her own language. Also for place names that are originally in plural, we (Novotná & Starý 2014) proposed to use nom. sing. without nom. ending as the basis for Czech declension.

5 Conclusion

Due to the rich inflectional system in Czech, all loanwords tend to be integrated into one of the declension paradigms. Accepting loanwords is thus a long process, which can be traced in a gradual adaptation of their transcription to the Czech spelling. Most of the loanwords from Icelandic and Old Norse have already “found their declensions” and are transcribed as they are pronounced in Czech.

There is a relatively extensive organized language management in Czech, focused on spelling that goes back to the national movement, and there are relatively large differences between Standard Czech and Common Czech. An attempt by Novotná & Starý (2014) to harmonize the translated forms of Old Norse proper names can be perceived as a continuation of this language tradition.

Also in the Czech translations of modern Icelandic literature, we can probably say that some kind of consensus is slowly forming. The nom. ending of masculine names is mostly omitted in oblique cases. But in contrast to Old Norse names, it has been shown that in nom. masc. the ending is mostly retained for Icelandic names. The situation for Modern Icelandic is different from Old Norse since there are far fewer names used in the texts, and they are only of minor importance for the artistic character of the texts. It might also be felt as inappropriate to deform names that are in use nowadays, e.g. by removing the nom. ending.

As always in translations, one is “dancing between two fires”: on the one hand, there are the demands of the users of the target language, who want every single noun to be declined, and on the other hand there is the original language, where the corruption of names by tearing away their parts, such as *-ur*, or *-dóttir*, changing the stem vowel, or adding a Czech possessive suffix *-ová*, would feel inappropriate.

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Keywords

Proper names, language planning, Czech, Icelandic, translations

Lykilorð

sérnöfn, málstýring, tékkneska, íslenska, þýðingar

Útdráttur

Í greininni er veitt yfirlit yfir sögu tékkneskrar tungu og tékkneskrar málstýringar. Áhersla er lögð á að rekja sögu þess hvernig erlend orð, bæði tökuorð og sérnöfn, skila sér í tékkneskum textum. Málgerð tékknesku, sem er mikið beygingamál, veldur því að almennt er vandkvæðum bundið að laga tökuorð að málinu, óháð málstefnu.

Skipulögð málstýring í tékknesku er tiltölulega umfangsmikil og mikil áhersla er lögð á staðlaða stafsetningu. Alla 20. öldina komu út *Tékkneskar réttitunarreglur (Pravidla českého pravopisu)* og þar var fjallað var um ritun tökuorða og einnig erlendra sérnafna og örnefna.

Það er í því samhengi sem niðurstöður rannsókna minna, á sögu þess hvernig farið er með íslensk nöfn í tékknesku, eru kynntar.

Nú er að verða almennt viðtekið í þýðingum úr norrænu (forníslensku) yfir á tékknesku að upprunalegum myndum sé haldið og að tékkneskar beygingar bætist við stofna hinna norrænu orða, þ.e. án nefnifallsendinga þeirra.

Í þýðingum á íslenskum nútímabókmenntum yfir á tékknesku er aftur á móti ekki að sjá neina viðleitni til þess að samræma meðferð sérnafna. Eigi að síður má greina í þeim ákveðna sameiginlega þætti, þar á meðal að sleppa nefnifallsendingum nafna í karlkyni þar sem þau koma fyrir í aukaföllum í tékknesku þýðingunum en halda þeim hins vegar þar sem þau koma fyrir í nefnifalli í tékkneskunni.

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