

TRANSLATING NAMES

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Several syntactic and stylistic problems are involved in the representation of names (proper nouns) in an English translation from Spanish: capitalization, the English possessive case, and use of articles, among others.¹

To discuss these topics it is necessary to have knowledge of several grammatical and semantic concepts: reference, the general/specific distinction, the proper/common distinction, and syntactic rules and categories of Spanish and English. Words refer to things, persons, ideas, conditions, actions, etc. The *reference* of a word or phrase is its meaning. A *common* noun can refer to any individual of a whole class of things, i.e. it has a very *general* reference. Some are more *specific* than others, e.g. "chair" as compared with "furniture." A given noun can be made more specific by context--either understood or made explicit by the addition of modifiers, quantifiers, determiners, etc. A noun that has a reference so specific as to be unique (at least in a given context) is called *proper*.

more general:	un líder	a leader
more specific:	un líder oriental	an oriental leader
proper noun (unique):	Mao Tse-tung	Mao Tse-tung
(unique in context):	el suroeste	the Southwest

In English the rule is to capitalize proper nouns as well as their derived forms, and in some cases this includes the common nouns unique in their context. In Britain, but not America, this convention applies to such words as "King" and "Queen," while in the American press "the President" is often seen.

The Definite Article with Names²

Some proper nouns consists of phrases containing a common noun and modifiers.

common noun:	república	republic
adjective:	dominicano, -a	Dominican
proper noun:	República Dominicana	Dominican Republic

As with common nouns and noun phrases, both Spanish and English use the definite article in such noun phrases:

la República Dominicana the Dominican Republic

But in names comprised of modified proper nouns, Spanish includes the definite article but English omits it:

el Volta Superior Upper Volta
el Viejo San Juan Old San Juan

In noun phrases which are not names but which include names with modifiers, the definite article is generally used in both Spanish and English:

la nueva Jerusalén the New Jerusalem

Some cases are nevertheless idiosyncratic in use of the definite article in one language or both and can only be considered exceptions to the rules:

la Argentina Argentina
la Haya the Hague

Articles and the English Possessive

In certain cases the English equivalent of the Spanish NP₁ de NP₂ is NP₂'s NP₁. This form is used only a. when NP₂ refers to the owner of NP₁, b. when NP₁ is derived from a verb of which NP₂ is the subject, and in certain other cases, but *not* c. when NP₁ is a part of NP₂ or d. when NP₁ and NP₂ are coreferential.

¹ Some other principles of translating names from Spanish to English are found in William C. Taylor and John Orange, *Bexar Archives Translators' Manual* (photocopy, University of Texas Archives, 1977), pp. 37-41 and p. 73.

² Robert P. Stockwell, J. Donald Bowen, and John W. Martin discuss the constituent structure of Spanish and English noun phrases in detail in *The Grammatical Structures of English and Spanish* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 64-104, and include a few references to proper nouns, and adjectives and nouns derived from proper nouns.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| a. los flanes de doña Luz | Doña Luz's custards |
| b. las quejas interminables del secretario | the secretary's constant complaints |
| c. la cima del Monte Etna | the top of Mount Etna |
| d. el libro de Isaias | the book of Isaiah |
| e. la ciudad de Atlanta | the city of Atlanta |

Some political units include the words "City," "Town," etc. as part of the name, in which case such a word not be considered a common noun in English. The city of New York has the optional alternate form "New York City." Some names of cities, such as Kansas City, always include "City." Most others never do.

In some cases N_2 or NP_2 precedes N_1 or NP_1 , but not in the "'s" form.

When NP_1 is not definite (when an indefinite article is used in Spanish) the following equivalences occur:

<i>Spanish</i>		<i>English</i>
$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{IndefArtSg } N_1 \\ \text{IndefArtPl } N_1 \text{ s} \end{array} \right\}$	de N_2	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{a } N_1 \\ \text{some } N_1 \text{ s} \end{array} \right\}$
		of N_2 ('s)

The "'s" can be omitted in English if N_2 is a common noun phrase:

una revista de Marta	a magazine of Marta's
un amigo de la secretaria	a friend of the secretary's
	a friend of the secretary
unas revistas de Marta	some magazines of Marta's
unos amigos de la secretaria	some friends of the secretary's
	some friends of the secretary

If the things referred to by N_1 are known to be less than the total of those possessed by N_2 , or if N_2 is several words long, the following equivalences occur:

un amigo de Juan María	a friend of Juan María
Vicencio de Ripperdá	Vicencio de Ripperdá

IndefArt $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Sg} \\ \text{Pl} \end{array} \right\}$ de DefArtPl N_1 s de N_2

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{one} \\ \text{some} \end{array} \right\}$ of N_2 's N_1 s

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{IndefArtSg } N_1 \\ \text{IndefArtPl } N_1 \text{ s} \end{array} \right\}$ de DefArtPl
de N_2

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{una revista de las de Marta} \\ \text{una de las revistas de Marta} \end{array} \right\}$ one of Marta's magazines

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{unas revistas de las de Marta} \\ \text{unas de las revistas de Marta} \end{array} \right\}$ some of Marta's magazines

English Adjectives and Nouns Derived from Proper Nouns

Names are generally capitalized. In addition English capitalizes adjectives derived from proper nouns

un fuerte español	a Spanish fort
un convento dominicano	a Dominican convent

and nouns derived from such adjectives:

un franciscano	a Franciscan
un puertorriqueño	a Puerto Rican

Several problems arise with such derived nouns in English.

1. Some of the nouns meaning "inhabitant of a place" or "member of an ethnic group" are different from the adjectives:

Adj: judío, -a	Jewish
N: judío, -a	Jew
Adj: español, -a	Spanish
N: español, -a	Spaniard

2. In some cases there is a special English noun form but it has found disfavor in recent times for social reasons and would be considered impolite and insulting under any circumstances. Examples are "chinaman," "Polack," and others, including many listed in dictionaries and carrying no caution concerning their usage. In these cases it is necessary to use the adjective form, as an adjective, and to

complete the noun phrase by adding a noun such as "people," "person," "man," "woman," etc.

3. Adjectives in general in English can be used as nouns (thus omitting the noun from the noun phrase) only when all four of the following conditions are met:

- a. There is no noun form different from the adjective form.
- b. The omitted noun is plural.
- c. The omitted noun is in the general sense (refers to an entire class).
- d. The omitted noun refers to humans.

Adjectives in this usage can be derived from both proper and common nouns: the poor, the rich, the Chinese, the French.

In the above cases adjectives are used. In some cases where the adjective form is the same as the noun, the plural of the noun is the same as the singular, namely all those that end in "-ese": a Japanese, three Chinese, some Portuguese.