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## TRANSLATION STRATEGIES IN *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*

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**Abstract:** This paper studies the various strategies applied by Lyubomir Nikolov, the translator of J.R.R. Tolkien's trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* into Bulgarian. The research focuses on personal names, toponyms and some nicknames as they, according to the author, are "deeply meaningful". But it is difficult to the reader to decipher them because of the tight blend of English and "Elfish". The Bulgarian translator of the book has made considerable efforts to follow Tolkien steps and draw the picture of the Middle Earth – a magical world that looks very real with its geography, peoples, their history and languages. His strategies in translating names turn very successful in showing the inner sense of their referents in the epic to the reader.

The study uses a parallel English-Bulgarian corpus of more than 130 proper names (Richards 1985). They are excerpted manually from the first two books of the trilogy, which comprise *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The diversity of the corpus data requires a number of strategies and procedures for rendering the exact meaning. We treat them as culture specific concepts as they belong to a fairy-tale book full of stories and legends. Different scholars put forth different classifications of translation techniques. Harvey (2000: 2-6) emphasizes four very important ones: 1. Functional equivalence: using a referent in the TL culture whose function is similar to that of the source language (SL) referent (e.g. Grimbeorn the Old/ Гримбеорн Стари). 2. Formal/ linguistic equivalence (a 'word-for-word' translation) (e.g. Lonely Mountain/ Самотната планина). 3. Transcription or 'borrowing' (i.e. transliterating the original term) (e.g. Esgaroth/ Есгарот) 4. Descriptive/ self-explanatory translation: using generic terms to convey the meaning (e.g. Midgewater Marshes/ блатата на Комарова вода). Newmark (1988: 83-86) proposes a more detailed list of procedures. Apart from those mentioned by Harvey (2000) he adds: Cultural equivalence: replacing a cultural word in the SL with a TL one (e.g. Shire/ Графството); Componential analysis: comparing an SL word with a TL word which has a similar meaning but is not an obvious one-to-one equivalent (e.g. Sandheaver/ Ровопяск); Synonymy: a "near TL equivalent" (Butterbur/ Мажирепей); Shifts or transpositions: it involves a change in the grammar from SL to TL (Loudwater/ Шумноструйка), etc.

The analysis shows that two or even more strategies can work together and sometimes it is very difficult to classify an excerpt. Such cases Newmark (1988: 91) terms couplets. Furthermore, we find metaphorical and metonymical mappings in the correspondences of the source language (SL) and target language (TL). They make the translated text even more forceful and incisive.

**Keywords:** translation strategies, personal names, toponyms, Bulgarian, *The Lord of the Rings*.

### INTRODUCTION

The world famous trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien is translated into more than 40 languages. In Bulgarian it is translated by Lyubomir Nikolov, whom the Association of Bulgarian translators rewarded for his translation of the book. As the translator himself points out in the prologue "translating the trilogy is an enormous pleasure but also dead weight beyond human abilities, which can only be carried by a scholar of Tolkien's rank". Furthermore, the translation of the book is a challenge because the author presents it as a "translation from Elfish". Thus, he involves the reader into a complicated and astounding game. Part of that game are the characters' names, the toponyms and the nicknames. They are a tight blend of English and "Elfish", loaded with a particular sense which may remain precluded if the translator leaves them undecoded. The Bulgarian translator, however, is very successful in rendering the exact meaning. His Bulgarian equivalents of Tolkien's names provoked this study which aims at classifying them according to a number of different strategies and procedures.

### METHODOLOGY

This research is based on more than 130 proper names<sup>121</sup> organized in a parallel English-Bulgarian corpus. The data is excerpted manually from the first two books of the trilogy, namely *The Fellowship of the Ring*. We study the

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<sup>121</sup> The term *proper names* is used here in the sense of Richards (1985:68) as "names of a particular person, place or thing".

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examples as culture specific concepts as they belong to fairy creatures and invented places in a magical world. In order to classify the variety of examples we apply a combination of strategies and procedures<sup>122</sup>.

Previous translation studies focused on literary translation from the point of view of linguistic and cultural issues (Albakry 2004, Graedler 2000, Jaaskelainen 1999, 2005, Leppihalme 1997), structuralism (Culler 1976), psychological and cognitive approaches (Bell 1998) and terminology (Picht and Draskau 1985). For the sake of clarifying the distinction between 'procedure' and 'strategy', we discuss the procedures of translating culture-specific terms and the strategies for rendering implications.

Harvey<sup>123</sup> (2000: 2-6) defines culture-specific terms as terms "specific to the SL (source language) culture" and offers four major techniques for translating them:

1. *Functional Equivalence*: the function of the referent in the target language (TL) culture is similar to that of the SL referent. This technique, however, is debatable. According to Weston (1991: 23) it is "the ideal method of translation," while Šarčević (1985: 131) states that it is "misleading and should be avoided."
2. *Formal Equivalence* or '*linguistic equivalence*': it stands for 'word-for-word' translation.
3. *Transcription* or '*borrowing*' (i.e. transliterating the original term): this technique is widely applicable with proper nouns. In cases with common nouns, especially where no readers' awareness of the SL is expected, transcription should be accompanied by an explanation or a footnote.
4. *Descriptive* or *self-explanatory* translation: it is relevant in various contexts where formal and functional equivalence are considered insufficiently clear. Sometimes, in such cases, the original SL term is added to avoid ambiguity.

Newmark (1988b) proposes different translation procedures, namely:

- *Transference*: it involves transliteration and is the same as what Harvey (2000: 5) calls "transcription."
- *Naturalization*: it adapts the SL word first to the normal pronunciation, then to the normal morphology of the TL. (Newmark, 1988b: 82)
- *Cultural equivalent*: it means replacing a cultural word in the SL with a TL one.
- *Functional equivalent*: it requires the use of a culture-neutral word. (Newmark, 1988b:83)
- *Descriptive equivalent*: the meaning of the word in the SL is explained in several words in the TL. (ibid.)
- *Componential analysis*: it means "comparing an SL word with a TL word which has a similar meaning but is not an obvious one-to-one equivalent, by demonstrating first their common and then their differing sense components." (Newmark, 1988b: 114)
- *Synonymy*: it is a "near TL equivalent."
- *Through-translation*: it is the literal translation of common collocations, names of organizations and components of compounds. It can also be called: calque or loan translation. (Newmark, 1988b: 84)
- *Shift or transposition*: it includes grammar changes in the SL to TL, for instance, (i) change from singular to plural, (ii) SL structure changes required when they do not exist in the TL, (iii) change of an SL verb or noun group to a TL word so forth. (Newmark, 1988b: 86)
- *Compensation*: it occurs when loss of meaning in one part of a sentence is compensated in another part. (Newmark, 1988b: 90)
- *Paraphrase*: in this procedure the explanation is much more detailed than that of *descriptive equivalent*. (Newmark, 1988b: 91)
- *Couplets*: it occurs when the translator combines two different procedures. (Newmark, 1988b:91)
- *Notes*: (foot)notes are additional information in a translation. (Newmark, 1988b:91)

Although some linguists consider a translation containing a lot of footnotes difficult to read, nonetheless, their use can help the readers in their understanding of the translated contents. Nida (1964: 237-39) claims that footnotes fulfill at least two functions: (i) they provide supplementary information, and (ii) call attention to the original's discrepancies.

A set of strategies are proposed by Malone (1988): Equation, Substitution, Divergence, Convergence, Amplification, Reduction, Diffusion, Condensation, Reordering. His classification is very similar to Newmark's (1988b) but uses different terms to refer to the same phenomena. He advocates the existence of these strategies with the necessary modifications the translators need to make to conform to the specificities of the target text.

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<sup>122</sup> Here we avoid the term translation method on purpose as, according to Newmark (1988: 81), "[w]hile translation methods relate to whole texts, translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language".

<sup>123</sup> Harvey (2000) uses alternatively culture-bound terms to express the same meaning.

Krings (1986: 18) defines translation strategy as “translator's potentially conscious plans for solving concrete translation problems in the framework of a concrete translation task,” and Loescher (1991: 8) believes that a translation strategy is “a potentially conscious procedure for solving a problem faced in translating a text, or any segment of it.”

We chose to apply Newmark's classification (1988b) in the present study as it turned to be the most detailed one and the most appropriate to fulfill the aims of the research. However, some necessary modifications were made to meet the specificities of the analyzed material.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

The classification suggested below is an improved version of Newmark's categorization (1988b) with some of the headings changed due to the purposes of the present study.

*Transliteration*, or *Transference* in Newmark's terminology (1988b), is used by the translator in those cases the proper nouns are not loaded with any specific meaning. e.g. (1) Esgaroth/ Есгарот; (2) Tom Bombadillo/ Том Бомбадило; (3) Carn Dym/ Карн Дум; the hidden Kingdom of (4) Thingol in the forest of (5) Neldoreth/ потайното кралство на Тингол сред гората Нелдорет. However, we see transliteration as interwoven with *Naturalization*, a separate procedure in Newmark's work (1988b). The examples show that the sound of ‘th’ [θ], typical for English and non-existent in Bulgarian, is replaced with its closest equivalent ‘т’ [t] (e.g. 1, 4, 5). In example (2) double ‘l’ in Bulgarian is replaced by just one ‘л’ [l] for the same reason, which is again an instance of *Naturalization*. The degree of *Naturalization* is even higher in example (3) where one part of the transliterated name underwent a change of the root vowel. Instead of using ‘и’ [i], which is the closest equivalent of English ‘y’, the translator chose Bulgarian ‘y’ [u] for the sake of the better sounding. However, it may not remain unnoticed that the letters look orthographically the same in the SL and TL, which can be interpreted as another play with the words on the part of the translator.

The procedure of *Formal equivalence*, or *Through-translation* in Newmark's words (1988), is widely applied by the translator in the instances where the names consist of common nouns, which have acquired the function and characteristics of proper nouns, e.g. (6) Lonely Mountain/ Самотната планина; (7) Ivy Bush/ “Бръшляновият храст”; (8) Green Dragon/ “Зеленият дракон”. However, some of the names in this group are translated by a combination of *Transliteration* and *Formal equivalence*, e.g. (9) “Master Hamfast”/ “майстор Бързохам”. ‘Ham’ is transliterated, while ‘fast’ is translated with its Bulgarian equivalent ‘бързо’. Additionally, *Naturalization* is also at work as the places of the two parts are exchanged in the translation. Malone (1988) calls this technique *Reordering*. Another account of *Naturalization* can be found in the wide use of infixes in Bulgarian composite words, one of them is ‘o’. Therefore, ‘бързо’ with its final ‘o’ fits well in the slot of the first part of the name and it is followed by ‘хам/ ham’.

Another example in this group is (10) Brandywine River/ река Брендивин. The first element of the composite is transliterated with the necessary *Naturalization*, ‘a’ [æ] is transferred to its closest equivalent in Bulgarian – ‘e’ [e]. The second element shows *Formal equivalence*, ‘wine’ is translated with its exact corresponding word ‘вино’ but the ending ‘o’ is omitted to create an allusion for a proper name. In (11) Sanduman/ Пясъчкин only the first part of the name is translated literally. The second part is not translated or transliterated, in the Bulgarian name it is naturalized as a kind of Bulgarian family name with the suffix ‘ин’. A similar strategy is applied to (12) Boffins/ Многознаевци. The name is transferred as a family name with the specific suffix in Bulgarian. What is particular about the name in the TL is that it is rendered by a composite of an adverb and a deverbal noun. The same strategy is employed in (13) Chubbs/ Едробузовци where the TL name is a combination of an adjective and a noun.

As *The Lord of the Rings* is a fantasy book we cannot definitely talk about *Cultural equivalents*. They are intertwined with *Functional equivalents*, terms which are not so widely used nowadays but which belong to the vocabulary of both SL and TL, e.g. (14) Shire/ Графството. A combination of *Transliteration* and *Functional equivalence* we observe in e.g. (15) Grimbeorn the Old/ Гримбеорн Стари. The first part of the name is transliterated, while the second part is translated with its functional counterpart in the TL. *Functional equivalence* is also detected in the diminutive (16) Sammie which in Bulgarian is represented by the diminutive suffix ‘-чо’ – Самчо. A similar case is the nickname (17) Fatty/ Шишко. The diminutive form here is translated with a suffix corresponding in function ‘-ко’. In (18) Mirkwood/ Мраколес the composite name consists of two nouns joined with the infix ‘o’, which can be regarded as a case of *Naturalization*. A specific element in the composite is the choice of the old Slavic ‘лес’ instead of its modern Bulgarian equivalent of ‘wood’ – ‘гора’. Having in mind

the specificities of the corpus there are a few examples of *Descriptive equivalence*. We view as descriptive those instances in which a single name in the SL is translated with a noun phrase (NP) in the TL, e.g. (19) Midgewater Marshes/ блатата на Комарова вода. The SL noun+noun composite is transferred into a noun phrase (NP) of a possessive adjective+noun. The same pattern is used in (20) Barrow-wight, a noun+noun composite, is rendered with a possessive adjective+noun – Могилната твар. (21) Weathertop/ Бурния връх shows a deviation, not from the point of view of structure (we observe the same pattern – noun+noun is transferred into possessive adjective+noun) but from cognitive perspective. The first part ‘weather’ is quite general in its meaning referring to both good weather and bad weather. In the translation, however, ‘буря/ storm’ draws the attention only to bad weather. It is metonymically related to the more general ‘weather’ and this connection can be interpreted as a cognitive mapping between a more general term and a more specific one (see Figure 1).

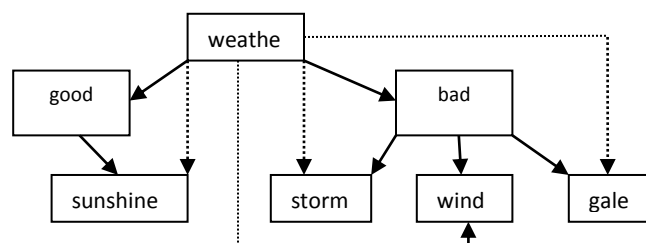


Figure 1. The semantic field of ‘weather’

Figure one illustrates the possible mappings between ‘weather’ and the words semantically related to it. It does not pretend to be exhaustive but just to depict the cognitive relations. The black arrows stand for the direct relations between the concepts, while the dotted arrows suggest indirect relations.

The specific characteristics of the corpus data determine the close association between *Componential analysis* and *Synonymy*. Even Newmark’s definitions (1988b) of both procedures “a similar meaning but is not an obvious one-to-one equivalent” for *Componential analysis* and “near TL equivalent” for *Synonymy* are not very convincing to set them apart as different translation strategies. The fuzzy boundary we put between them lies in the fact that with *Synonymy* there is a metaphorical relation between the SL and TL components. As instances of *Componential analysis* can be considered e.g. (22) Sandheaver/ Ровопяськ and (23) Dimrill Gate/ портата на Смутнолей. In (22), similarly to (9), the places of the two elements of the composite noun are exchanged in the translation. ‘Sand’ is translated literally but ‘heaver’, which is generally used as a tool to ‘raise or lift with effort or force’ (see <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/heaver>), is not. To ‘dig’, the closest equivalent of ‘рoвя’, is metaphorically related to ‘heaving’ through conceptual mapping. Digging sand involves heaving in the process, therefore there is an associative connection between them. However, they cannot be defined as synonyms as one is included in the other. Rather, they are conceptually related.

The composite chosen by the translator for (23) Dimrill Gate/ портата на Смутнолей is even more complicated conceptually. ‘Dim’ is synonymous to ‘blurred, cloudy, dingy, dull, vague’. ‘Смут’, on the other hand, is associated primarily with ‘confusion and disconcertment’ but there is an element of vagueness and uncertainty in its connotation. Hence, vagueness is the crossing area in the semantic fields of ‘dim’ and ‘смут’. The second part of the composite is the noun ‘rill’, which is synonymous with ‘brook, creek, rivulet’. In Bulgarian it is rendered with the verb ‘ляя’ denoting the activity of water flowing or running. In this case we observe a metaphoric relation between an entity and its characteristic self-propelled motion. Apart from *Cognitive relations*, *Naturalization* procedure is also utilized, by way of the infix ‘o’ and the imperative form of the verb. A kind of *Shift or transposition* can be recognized in developing the translated composite: SL adjective+noun → TL noun/adverb+verb.

A corresponding set of translation procedures is assigned to (24) Goldberry/ Златоронка: *Formal equivalence* for the first element of the composite ‘gold’ → ‘злато’, *Cognitive relations* between the SL noun ‘berry’, meaning ‘bean, grain’ and the TL verb ‘роня’, meaning ‘shell, seed’. There is a direct semantic relation between beans and grains and the activity of seeding. Gender *Shift* is implemented in the turn of the SL neuter noun into the TL feminine noun, marked by the suffix ‘-ка’.

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Similarly, in (25) pipe-leaf/ пушилист (a plant resembling the tobacco in its characteristics, which is used by the hobbits for smoking), one of the elements is a *Formal equivalent* 'leaf' → 'лист'. The other element in the SL 'pipe', which is a tool used for smoking, is cognitively related to the TL verb 'пуша/ *smoke*'. The infix '-и' serves for *Naturalization* of the TL composite and there is a *Shift* in transferring SL noun+noun into TL verb+noun. The same set of procedures is applied to the composite (26) Butterbur/ Мажирепей. 'Bur' is translated literally 'рпей', which is an instance of *Formal equivalence*. 'Butter' in its turn is cognitively mapped on the verb associated with it 'мажа/ spread (butter)'. Therefore, the configuration shift is again SL noun+noun into TL verb+noun with the infix '-и' performing the *Naturalization*. However, the undefined status of the morpheme 'butter-' can lead our analysis in a different direction. It is possible to develop not the noun but the homonymous verb 'to butter'. Then, it will result in construction equivalence: SL verb+noun = TL verb+noun.

In the translation of the following composite (27) River Hoarwell/ река Скрежноблик there are four procedures applied:

*Formal equivalence*: the adjective 'hoar' 'frosty, chilly, icy' → the noun 'скреж' 'ice';

*Cognitive relation*: the noun 'well' 'water hole, pool, spring, watering place' → the verb 'бликам' 'gush forth, well up, spout up';

*Naturalization*: the infix 'о';

*Shift/ transposition*: the ending of the TL verb is omitted so that it may sound as a Proper noun.

The procedure of *Synonymy* as proposed by Newmark (1988b) always works together with *Cognitive relation*. For instance, in (28), Bag End/ Торбодън, 'bag' is translated literally 'торба' (*Formal equivalence*), while 'end' is expressed with a synonym – 'дъно', which is more specific and corresponds to 'bottom'. Yet, the end of the bag is its bottom, which makes them conceptually linked and referring to *Cognitive relation*. Additionally, the infix 'о' is present (*Naturalization*) and the ending is omitted (*Shift/ transposition*). (29) Will Whitfoot/ Уил Белоног is more a case of metonymy than synonymy. 'Foot' is rendered with the outdated Bulgarian noun 'нога/ *leg*', which is metonymically related to foot via a part-whole relationship. Furthermore, there is the infix 'о' (*Naturalization*) and the ending is missing (*Shift/ transposition*). Synonymy is found in (30) Rivendell/ Ломидол. 'Dell' is translated literally 'дол' (*Formal equivalence*) but the verb 'riven', meaning 'split' is translated with a synonym 'лома/ *break (up), crush, smash*' or it can be interpreted as *Cognitively-related* equivalent because splitting and breaking are semantically connected. *Naturalization* is provided by the infix 'и'. (31) Halfling is reproduced with a synonym in the TL 'Полуръст/ half-sized', thus the SL example is slightly modified for the purposes of achieving better understanding by the reader.

*Shift or transposition* we observe in (32), Loudwater/ Шумноструйка, together with some other translation procedures: *Formal equivalence* – 'loud/ шумен', *Cognitive relation* – 'water' is conceptually connected with 'струя/ *stream, trickle*'. We identify *transposition* in the shift from the SL neuter noun into TL feminine noun due to the specificities of Bulgarian, where inanimate nouns are also marked as feminine or masculine. The same shift is located in (33) Withywindle/ Върбоструйка. The other procedures applied are *Formal equivalence* – 'withy/ *върба, rakuma*' and what Malone (1988) calls *Substitution*: the translator exchanges the second element of the composite 'windle', meaning 'a device for winding thread or yarn' with 'струя/ *stream, trickle*'. Another kind of *Shift* is turning the SL preposition+noun composite (34) 'Bywater' into a substantivized preposition+adjective 'Крайречкино' while the neuter gender is preserved and the elements of the composite are translated literally (*Formal equivalence*). As a type of *Shift* can be interpreted the translation of Bilbo's family name (35) Baggins → Торбинс. It is partly a *Formal equivalent*, 'bag/ торба' and partly transliteration of the original.

Almost all the varieties of translation strategies can be recognized in the hobbits' family names defined by Tolkien as 'botanical names':

(36) Goatleaf/ Козилист: *Formal equivalence* – 'goat/ коза' and 'leaf/ лист'; *Naturalization* – the infix 'и';

(37) Mr. Mugwort/ Пелински: *Formal equivalence* – 'mugwort/ пелин' and *Naturalization* – adding an ending typical for a Bulgarian family name;

(38) Heathertoes/ Пиренов: *Formal equivalence* – 'heather/ пирен' and *Naturalization* – an ending typical for a Bulgarian family name, additionally, there is *Reduction* because 'toe' is not translated;

(39) Rushlight/ Камъшан: *Formal equivalence* – 'rush/ камъш', *Naturalization* – an ending typical for a Bulgarian personal name and *Reduction* – 'light' is omitted;

(40) Appledore/ Ябълчан: *Formal equivalence* – 'appledore', meaning 'apple-tree' and 'ябълка', which can stand for both the tree and the fruit, *Naturalization* – an ending typical for a Bulgarian personal name;

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(41) Ferny/ Папратак: *Formal equivalence* – ‘fern/ папрат’ and *Naturalization* – an ending typical for a Bulgarian nickname;

(42) Thistlewool/ Пухотрън: *Formal equivalence* – ‘thistle/ трън’, *Cognitive relation* – ‘wool’ is cognitively connected to ‘пух/ fluff’ and *Naturalization* – the infix ‘o’.

The procedures of *Compensation* and *Paraphrase* are irrelevant for the analysis of the present corpus because they are applied to larger pieces of context and not just separate words, moreover names. We disregard *Couplets* because the data showed that in most of the cases more than two procedures are applied. As for *Notes* we find them very useful when additional information and clarification is needed. However, the corpus data contains no such instances.

## CONCLUSION

The present paper reveals various strategies chosen by *The Lord of the Rings*’ translator into Bulgarian in rendering Tolkien’s implications. They seem to play a crucial role in perceiving, recognizing and processing the connotations carried especially by the proper nouns. Regarding the translation of proper nouns, Newmark (1988a: 214) claims that “normally, people’s first and sure names are transferred, thus preserving nationality and assuming that their names have no connotations in the text” but the corpus of this study confirmed the opposite.

If an inexperienced translator renders such a literary text without considering adequately the connotations it is quite likely that they will not be passed into the TL and will be entirely lost to the target audience; consequently, the translation will turn to be incompetent.

In order to have an effective translation it is necessary for it to produce the same (or at least similar) effects on the TL readers as the book in the SL provoked in its readers. We believe this paper proves that Lyubomir Nikolov, the translator of this particular book is very successful in his challenging task of efficiently rendering the personal names and toponyms, preserving the significant source language implications. In other words, as a competent translator he enables the TL reader to recognize and enjoy Tolkien’s imagination rich in implications and allusions in its completeness.

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