

DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSLATION IN 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.

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

ТРУДНОСТИ ПЕРЕВОДА ВО «ВЛАСТЕЛИНЕ КОЛЕЦ»

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Аннотация: В данной статье рассматриваются различные стратегии, применяемые Любомиром Николовым, переводчиком J.R.R. Трилогия Толкина «Властелин колец» на болгарском языке. Основное внимание в исследовании уделено личным именам, топонимам и некоторым прозвищам, поскольку они, по мнению автора, носят «глубокий смысл». Но читателю трудно их расшифровать из-за плотного смешения английского и «эльфийского». Болгарский переводчик книги приложил значительные усилия, чтобы следовать шагам Толкина и нарисовать картину Средиземья – волшебного мира, который выглядит очень реальным со своей географией, народами, их историей и языками.

Ключевые слова: стратегии перевода, личные имена, топонимы, болгарский язык, «Властелин колец».

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/ Ровопяськ); 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.

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 names¹²¹ 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 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 procedures¹²². 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 culturespecific terms and the strategies for rendering implications. Harvey¹²³ (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. 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; 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.

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