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ANALYSIS OF PROPER NAMES IN J.K. ROWLING'S
“HARRY POTTER AND THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE” AND
THEIR TRANSLATION INTO ARMENIAN AND RUSSIAN

The following article deals with the analysis of proper nouns in J.K. Rowling's “Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone” and the problem of translating them into Armenian and Russian.

In the fantastic world of fiction, names are often created with a particular purpose, they may even carry hints to the reader concerning the future actions of the characters. As a result, translation of proper names is one of the most complex issues when it comes to the regards of literary translation.

Key words: *J.K. Rowling, proper name, borrowing, calque, literal translation, adaptation, transliteration*

According to Peter Newmark (1988) people's names should, as a rule, not be translated when their names have no connotation in the text. He adds some exceptions such as names of known saints, monarchs, and popes. In addition, with regard to the names that have connotations in the imaginative literature such as in comedies, allegories, fairy tales, and some children's stories, Newmark recommends that they should be translated.

Newmark also stated that “the translator should explain the connotations of a fictive surname in a glossary and leave the names intact” (1981). However this might not be very effective, as it will interrupt the reading process because the readers will have to stop reading and go to the glossary to discover the name’s meaning. This is a complex issue and as in any instance of translation, each translator’s choices about the translating of connotations rest upon “their own frames of reference, the total sum of their knowledge, experiences, ideas, norms and values” as well as their skill in and understanding of the source and target languages and cultures (Van Coillie 2006). One must also be very careful to avoid confusion e.g. about the character’s gender (Van Coillie 2006), and the following example will prove this: the Russian translation of “Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone” (J. K. Rowling, 1997) initially made the character called **Blaise Zabini** a girl, though later he was revealed to be a boy.

Created by British author Joanne Kathleen Rowling, the “Harry Potter” series tells us a story about the growth and adventures of a boy wizard and his friends at a school of wizardry. Even though it is considered to be children’s literature, many adults all over the world enjoy reading the series and discover hidden facts and secrets which are not comprehensible for children. Here most proper names imply a “symbolic” meaning, and that’s why translators have come across so many difficulties while translating the books. Rowling is not a simple storyteller, one of the central aspect in the novels is also her innovative

language. If we read the novel attentively we can foresee some of the features and actions of the characters, just by paying attention to the etymology of their names.

Due to the tremendous popularity of Harry Potter, academia has taken it up as a subject for research, dissecting the books to understand Rowling's magic. The books have been studied in terms of, for instance, how the coined words have been translated into various languages (Van Coillie 2006) how British culture is reflected in them. It must be mentioned that not all of the coinages are equally transparent for readers, since the origin of several names is Old English, or even Latin and French. Let us discuss several examples.

The name **Voldemort** is made up from French words “vol”, “de”, “mort”, and it means “the flight of death”. This truly makes sense, because this character is trying to find a way to win a victory over Death, he's capable of flying, and all he does is just propagating and practising terror, horror and murder. In the Russian translation the name was translated as *Волан-де-Морт*. According to Rowling, the “t” in *Voldemort* is silent as it is in the French word “mort”, and it shouldn't be pronounced. Yet the characters in the film version of “*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*” pronounced the “t” and after that even the audiobook pronunciation was changed. Anyway this specific feature is preserved in the Armenian translation, where we have *Վոլդեմորտ*.

The name **Albus Dumbledore** has an interesting etymology which is opposed to that of **Voldemort**. “Albus” means “white” in Latin, and from the very beginning this name prompts us who will be the one to save the day in all the volumes. The word “dumbledore” is a rare term for a kind of bee, which is nowadays mostly known as “bumblebee”. J. K. Rowling states, that as the headmaster of Hogwarts has a strong inclination towards music, she can easily imagine him humming to himself and walking around, and that’s why she has chosen that surname. In both translations the name was translated by means of transliteration (the method of representing letters or words of one alphabet in the characters of another alphabet or script): *Ալբուս Դամբլդոր* and *Альбус Дамблдор*.

The name **Nicolas Flamel** is famous not only in J.K. Rowling's magical world but also in the real one where he is known to be a successful French script and manuscript-seller who, after his death, developed a reputation as an alchemist who have discovered the Philosopher's stone and became immortal. The “s” in the name is silent, because it's a French name, yet in Russian it was translated as *Николас Фламель* (again by transliteration) whereas in Armenian it is *Նիկոլիս Ֆլամել*.

Using the method of calque, that is, a loan translation of a particular kind, when a total syntagma is borrowed, but its individual elements are translated literally (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958), the Russian translator translated the following names:

Ravenclaw (one of Hogwarts's four houses) = raven (ворон) + claw (коготь) = *Когтевран* (*Ռեյվենքլոյ*, in Armenian);

Hufflepuff (one of Howarts's four houses) = huffle (надувать, раздувать) + puff (дуновение) = *Пуффендуй* (*Հաֆլիփաֆ*);

Griphook (a goblin) = grip (хватать) + hook (крюк) = *Крюкохват* (*Գրիֆհուք*);

Cleansweep (a company that produces brooms for broom sports) = clean (чистый) + sweep (мести, подметать) = *Чистомет* (*Քլինսիփ*);

Neville Longbottom (one of the main characters) = long (длинный, долгий) + bottom (низ, дно) = *Невилл Долгопупс* (*Նևիլ Լոնգբոթոմ*);

The translation of the last surname raised a huge wave of protest, because the Russian version made readers regard this character as someone of less importance, funny and stupid, whereas the sequels of the story reveal J.K. Rowling's main purpose: yes, the name itself is considered to be quite humorous, but "bottom" also means "stamina, staying power", and as a philologist Rowling new exactly why she used this word. It seems to accurately describe Neville's personality, overall devotion to Harry Potter and struggle for freedom and independence.

Diagon Alley is a fictional high street located in London, its name is a near homophone of the word "diagonally". Yet it is translated into Russian and Armenian literally, so the word-play is not preserved: we have *Косой переулок* and *Շեղանիք նրբանոց*.

Severus Snape (one of the teachers at Hogwarts) plays an important role in the plot. In the Russian translation the character's name was changed to *Северус Снегг* most likely because the translator wanted to emphasize the reserved personality of the character and to adapt the name to the Russian culture: “снeг” = “snow”. Yet this change was not at all easily accepted by the book fans, who had already read it in the original, because the translation sounded a bit odd. Fortunately those who read the book for the first time were quite satisfied with the Russian version. The Armenian translator gave preference to the original name, so now we have *Սևերուս Մեյկլֆ*.

In the case of a lacuna, usually a metalinguistic one, borrowing is the simplest translation procedure of all. Indeed, it would scarcely be a procedure of any relevance here if the translator did not occasionally need to make use of it in order to create some particular stylistic effect, e.g. to introduce an element of local colour (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958). J.K. Rowling's magical world has a lot of innovations, and among them we can name the game called *Quidditch* (a wizarding sport played on broomsticks), and in both translations it is preserved as *Քվիդիչ* and *Квиддич*.

There are some names of animals that have been translated literally in both versions:

Fang - *Ֆանգիք* - Клык;

Fluffy - *Բախնուխիկ* - Пушок

But there are also several cases when the Russian translator decided to change some other names too by creating equivalents:

Hedwig - Հեդվիգ - Букля;

Scabbers - Սքեբերու - Короста (the word “scab” means “короста”, “чесотка” in Russian).

When we speak about pets’ names it is very often important to translate them literally into the target language in order to preserve their peculiarities and characteristic features so that the target reader can understand why the author has chosen this or that name. It has always been a debatable question whether we should do the same with the names and surnames of people. In the original version we have **Professor Sprout** and **Madame Hooch**. They were respectively translated into Armenian as Պրոֆեսոր Սփրաութ and մադամ Հուչ. In the Russian translation we see the following: *Профессор Стеббль* and a very strange name *Мадам Трюк*. Maybe the translator wanted to emphasize that the latter was the teacher of Quidditch, but anyway this name makes no sense.

We can bring one more example of name-adaptation in the Russian translation: a centaur named **Firenze** was translated into Armenian as Ֆիրենցի whereas in the Russian version we have *Флоренц*. It is possible that the etymology of the word was taken into account by the translator because *Florence* (Флоренция, the name of the chief city of Tuscany) = *Fiorenze* (in old Italian) = *Firenze* (in modern Italian).

The Mirror of Erised is one of the magical artefacts that has been created in a spirit of fun, because while it is much more revealing than a normal mirror, it is interesting rather than useful. If one looks into that mirror he'll see all his dreams come true. While reading the book one can think that it's a mysterious word of something magical, but J.K. Rowling doesn't keep anything just on the surface: if we read the word vice versa we'll manage to penetrate into the real meaning, the word "Erised" actually means "Desire". Both the Armenian and the Russian translators have found the words which are not only equal in meaning but also preserve the mystery and the beauty of the original: **Erised** - *Գաղափար* - Еиналеж.

Besides the "ROSMAN" translation of "Harry Potter" we also have the latest "Makhaon" version. It was printed by the "Makhaon" publishing house after the licence of the "ROSMAN" publishing house expired. The strong desire to stand out for something new and innovative made M. Spivak "adapt" the text to the level of children's literature, whereas in reality many people don't agree with the statement, that it is a childish book.

As for the proper names we can't state that the "ROSMAN" translation is perfect and is not sometimes clumsy but the "Makhaon" version leaves the readers in confusion: M. Spivak changed the name of the character **Rubeus Hagrid** to *Рубеус Огрид*, and made the people who were reading the book for the first time be afraid of him, because the kind giant got a name consistent with the Russian word *огр* (*ogre* in French), which

means “a frightening character who eats human beings, especially children”.

The translation of the name **Severus Snape** is a debatable one in both Russian versions but M.Spivak managed to hide the true personality of the character by creating a funny name *Злотеус Злей*. Those people who have read all the seven books know exactly that Severus Snape's reserved character is just a mask to conceal his own feelings and in the seventh book we find out that Harry Potter names his third child after two people who have sacrificed themselves to save his life, so his son's name is *Albus Severus Potter*, consequently the child's name was translated as *Альбус Злотеус Поттер*. We also have **Oliver Wood** as *Оливер Древ*, **Professor Quirrell** as *Профессор Страунс*, **Ravenclaw House** as *факультет Вранзор*, **Hufflepuff house** as *факультет Хуффльпуфф*, and one of the most important names **Albus Dumbledore** as *Альбус Думбльдор*. All these changes can't be accepted because they make the book series look primitive and we can also add that the new translations don't have the beauty so typical of the original text.

To sum up the following can be concluded:

- Translation of proper words is not as easy as it seems. One has to be well acquainted with both source and target language cultures in order to find out the proper equivalents or preserve the original variants for some expressive purposes.
- Although the Harry Potter books have been studied in detail already, the possible scope of research topics has by no

means yet been fully discovered or exhausted; merely from the point of view of translation studies there are several themes deserving attention, especially the translation of proper names.

- We can surely state, that the Armenian translation of proper names in “Harry Potter” is the closest to the original because it almost always preserves the pronunciation of the original and does not use any kinds of name-shifts, such as, for example, the method of calque.

- While carrying out our research we came across several “untranslatable” units which have been transferred into Armenian by means of the method of borrowing. These words are not to be regarded as foreignisms.

- The first Russian translation tends to translate everything, especially magically meaningful names by means of calque and literary translation. This attempt can be considered successful though sometimes it causes some misinterpretations of the real purposes of the author.

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ԳԱՅԱՆԵ ՀԱԿՈՒԲՅԱՆ, ՔՐԻՍՏԻՆԵ ՕԶԱՆՅԱՆ – Ջ.Բ. Ռոուլինգի «Հարրի Փոթերը և փիլիսոփայական քարը» վեպի հատուկ անունների վերլուծությունը և դրանց թարգմանությունը վեպի հայերեն և ռուսերեն տարբերակներում – Սույն հոդվածի նպատակն է վերլուծել Ջ.Բ. Ռոուլինգի «Հարրի Փոթերը և փիլիսոփայական քարը» վեպի հատուկ անունները և պարզել դրանց թարգմանելիության խնդիրը վեպի հայերեն և ռուսերեն տարբերակներում: Գեղարվեստական գրականության ֆանտաստիկ աշխարհում հերոսների անունների ընտրությունը հաճախ ունի որոշակի նպատակ, անունները կարող են նույնիսկ որոշակի ակնարկներ տալ ընթերցողին հերոսների հետագա գործողությունների վերաբերյալ: Որպես արդյունք հատուկ անունների թարգմանությունը դառնում է ամենախրթին հարցերից մեկը, հատկապես երբ խոսքը գնում է գեղարվեստական թարգմանության մասին:

Հիմնաբառեր. Ջ.Բ.Ռոուլինգ, հատուկ անուն, փոխառություն, պատճենում, բառացի թարգմանություն, աղապստացիա, գրադարձություն:

ГАЯНЕ АКОПЯН, КРИСТИНЕ ОГАНЯН – Анализ имен собственных в романе Дж. К. Роулинг “Гарри Поттер и Философский камень” и их перевод на армянский и русский языки – Данная статья посвящена анализу имен собственных в романе Дж. К. Роулинг “Гарри Поттер и Философский камень” и исследованию проблемы их переводимости на

армянский и русский языки. В фантастическом мире художественной литературы выбор имен героев часто имеет определенную цель, имена могут даже намекать читателю на последующие действия персонажей. В результате перевод имен собственных становится одной из сложнейших сфер, особенно когда речь идет о художественном переводе.

Ключевые слова: *Дж. К. Роулинг, имя собственное, заимствование, калькирование, дословный перевод, адаптация, транслитерация.*