

Confundo Linguam.

*Translating non-existent phenomena
in the Harry Potter series*

“Tinta”

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INTRODUCTION

Invented words pose an unusual difficulty in translation. Normally, the translator is provided with a set of possible target language (TL) equivalences for a certain phrase or expression in the source language (SL). In extreme cases, like words or puns that refer to non-existent creatures or are created by the author, the translators have to face an unexpected problem, namely, that there is no such possible set of solutions to choose from. In such cases, translators are often obliged to conceive of new words bearing in mind the aim of creating an experience of the text for the TL audience similar to that of the SL reader with priority over literary equivalence (Garcés, 2003).

The reason why the Harry Potter series is particularly suitable for the present analysis is that imaginary creatures and objects are central to the text. There are innumerable words and expressions in the series that are relevant to the topic. Hahn (2007) summarises these difficulties in the following way: “[t]here are countless made-up words, for a start. ... And then there's the wordplay, the prophecies and rhymes ... There are also the spells and the anagrams”. In the present paper, I will examine proper nouns (persons, places), with particular emphasis on ‘loaded names’ (as opposed to ‘conventional names’, see Fernandes, 2006), and common nouns (spells and charms, the names of imaginary creatures, both previously known to the English-speaking audience and those created by Rowling, and other words made-up by the author). The Hungarian translator opted for changing many of the names and created new words in the TL text, while the other translations (for example the German or Spanish; see Garcés, 2003) preserved the original forms. This fact offers a really interesting area for research to see what may account for the reason (or at least for the existence) of these changes in the Hungarian translation.

The present paper aims at introducing the difficulties peculiar to translating the Harry Potter books by Joanne Kathleen Rowling and other similar literary texts which contain invented words or words referring to non-existent phenomena, through examining the methods Tamás Boldizsár Tóth, the Hungarian translator of the Harry Potter series, applied.

The research question of this paper is what linguistic and extra-linguistic elements influenced the translator of the Harry Potter series on the lexical, pragmatic and cultural levels. Furthermore, I wish to establish a taxonomy which is especially suitable for distinguishing the lexical items that refer to non-existent phenomena. I will primarily deal with the translator’s tasks on the lexical level, as this is the most determining in the case of

the words to be examined, and the translation of such words rarely (if ever) influences higher levels of language.

Although the Harry Potter series does not strictly belong to children's literature, in a sense (and in one that is of great significance for translation), it is abundant in elements that justify treating the series as a piece of children's literature: the fantasy-world it takes place in, the mythological creatures which frequently re-appear, and several elements of (folk)tales. Consequently, there are special requirements in translations that need to be taken into consideration when deciding how to translate certain words.

In the paper, I will cover the following topics. In the first chapter, I will provide the analytical frame that is to be used with a review of the relevant literature. Next, it will be shown through examples how and to what extent the different translation strategies were applied in the cases of the certain word categories: proper nouns and common nouns, within the latter group distinguishing words which stand for already existing creatures with lacking equivalent in the TL, and words made-up by Rowling (both with and without Latin roots). Finally, the necessary conclusions will be drawn with the help of a table summarising the results.

1. ANALYTICAL FRAME

In the analysis, the categories based on Vinay and Darbelnet (1995/2004) and Garcés (2003) are used as the theoretical basis. Garcés claims that the translator has three basic choices: to focus on the (implicit) meaning of the word, that is, to translate it; to familiarise the target reader with the word or, as Minier (2004) calls it, to ‘domesticate’ the word, (or to ‘foreignise’ it from the SL); or, thirdly, to emphasise the formal characteristics of the item, highlighting the puns, alliterations or other wordplays that occur. It means that “[t]he translator thus has to decide not only how to translate but when to translate and when to leave words in the original” (Jentsch, 2004, p. 286). It is the translator’s responsibility to find the balance in the translation between the original word with all its playfulness and the characteristics of the target language. According to Garcés, there are two main tendencies in translating names (if the translator judges that the word has to be translated at all): (i) using spelling adaptations and (ii) producing meaning adaptations. Vinay and Darbelnet distinguish translation types on another basis: they speak of **literal** and **oblique** translation as main categories, and within these, they differentiate seven kinds of translation types: borrowing (though they do not make a difference between changing and maintaining the spelling), calque, and literal translation within the literal translation strategies, and transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation belong to the oblique translation type.

As it has been mentioned before, translation theory has two fundamental trends: literal, or word-for-word, translation and free or oblique translation. The former aims at the utmost accurate translation on the lexical level, while the latter focuses on semantic concordance on a higher level (Hatim & Munday, 2004). As it has been stated, Vinay and Darbelnet (1995/2004) allocate three processes to literal translation. **Borrowing** refers to the phenomenon when the translator keeps the original word, changing (*dollars–dollár*) or preserving (*party, tequila*) its spelling. A similar method is **calque**, when the translator borrows an expression, then translates it word-by-word, such as *science-fiction*. A calque can be either lexical or structural. The process when the translator transfers the original message into the TL creating a “grammatically and idiomatically appropriate TL text” is called **literal translation** (such as *I left my spectacles on the table downstairs – Odalent hagyta a szemüvegét az asztalon*) (p. 149).

However, word-for-word translation is not appropriate in all cases. If the literally translated item

- i. gives another meaning, or

- ii. has no meaning, or
- iii. is structurally impossible, or
- iv. does not have a corresponding expression within the metalinguistic experience of the TL, or
- v. has a corresponding expression, but not within the same register, (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995/2004, pp. 149-150)

then the translation has to be considered inapt, thus unacceptable. In these cases, the translator can turn to oblique translation types. **Transposition** refers to the operation when the word class of the element is changed, but the meaning is preserved (e.g., *to propose* – *make a proposal*). As the invented words in the Harry Potter series have a determined syntactic role (they are usually nouns or noun phrases), this was not an option in the case of non-existent phenomena for Tóth to apply. **Modulation** is a play with the form and the message: instead of translating the word literally, the translator may choose the negative form of a word with the opposite meaning (e.g., *he lives* – *nem halt meg* [he did not die]). Although this method is not very common in the series for the words to be examined either, a couple of examples can be found. Every language has its own recurring expressions and idioms for certain situations, which lose their meanings if translated literally; in such cases, the translator shall find the **equivalent** for the given item (*like a bull in a china shop* – *mint elefánt a porcelánboltban* [like an elephant in a china shop]). During the procedure of **adaptation**, “translators have to create a new situation that can be considered as being equivalent. Adaptation can; therefore, be described as a special kind of equivalence, a situational equivalence” (Vinay & Darbelnet, p. 151).

In translating the Harry Potter series, this last method, adaptation, is very common: Rowling has a tendency to create new words, or, as Garcés (2003) calls them, neologisms, by the blending of similar-sounding words, thus resulting in a lexical item with several meanings and potential equivalents connected to them. As Elekes mentions in connection with István Tótfalusi’s translation of Lewis Carroll’s *The Jabberwocky* (but it applies in the present case of the Harry Potter-translation as well), when the text is “nonsense”, the translator faces the problem of first reconstructing the words that are supposed to constitute the fictional one, and then producing a similar expression. This approach presupposes that the text has a meaning, that is, it is the content that matters.

Not all of the above procedures occur in every category of non-existent phenomena established in this paper; therefore, they will not be mentioned in the list of operations within the particular chapters.

Orthography (that is, spelling) is another important issue in translation. Although it is not influential in terms of meaning, it still has substantial authority over the reception of a work, especially if it is a work of children's literature. Foreign names are indispensable in the case of the translation of works like the Harry Potter series. Even though there were times when the tendency was to domesticate every name – think of “*Verne Gyula*”, the Hungarianised version of Jules Verne's name (K. Szécsényi, personal communication, March 31, 2012), or Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* in Dezső Kosztolányi's translation, *Évike Tündérországbán* (s.a., Gergely R's edition; I. Józan, personal communication, April 5, 2012); today, this is not a generally accepted custom anymore. Nevertheless, as we are talking about children's literature, it must be assumed that the audience (at least partly) consists of children, who may find it difficult to identify with the characters if they cannot even pronounce their name. As Fernandes (2006) calls it, readability is an important aspect in deciding whether to preserve the original form of the name or word or to change it. If the translators feel the orthography is too unfamiliar to the target audience, they can decide to change the spelling while preserving the pronunciation.

Fernandes (2006) points out (sometimes quoting Shisler, 1997) that sound features can influence meaning in two ways. Both are in connection with the associations the sequence of sounds recalls, but while phonaesthetics directly evokes certain feelings and impressions with the help of the sounds' own features (cacophony, euphony), **onomatopoeia** makes connection to other words with the help of imitative speech sounds that resemble non-verbal noises or sounds, and the emotions these words generate are related to the actual sounds. As Nuckolls (1999) phrases it, “[t]he term sound symbolism is used when a sound unit such as a phoneme, syllable, feature, or tone is said to go beyond its linguistic function as a contrastive, non-meaning-bearing unit, to directly express some kind of meaning” (p. 228), though this extra-linguistic meaning can to some extent differ from language to language.

Phonaesthetics, as it has been mentioned, is the study of the influence that certain speech sounds have on the audience. Some sounds or sound-clusters evoke positive (like *gl*- such as in *glamour*, *glimmer*, etc.), others negative associations (e.g., *sl*-, like *slight*, *slaughter*, etc.) by themselves; they are called **phonesthemes**. “The shared cultural response to a phonestheme is called phonesthesia” (Fernandes, 2006, pp. 46-47). For example, according to Nuckolls (1999), words with predominantly back vowels (e.g., [a]) are considered more serious or important than those with front vowels (such as [i]).

Although the words which have no equivalent in the TL language may be analysed from several different points of view, as it can be seen from the above, Vinay and Darbelnet's

and Garcés's taxonomies, the phonaesthetic and onomatopoeic features of the words seem to provide the most appropriate (and interesting) background for the present research; therefore, these will be the main aspects of my analysis.

2. ANALYSIS

2.1. PROPER NOUNS

As Fernandes (2006) points out, names in children's literature play an important role "in creating comic effects and portraying characters' personality traits" (p. 44). Therefore, the translator has to make sure the target audience receives an impression similar to the readers of the original text. In such cases, they need to decide which element of the word or name evokes the determining feelings or associations in the reader and have to base their decisions upon that. In *Harry Potter*, most names are semantically **loaded**. It means that, as opposed to **conventional** names, which are "unmotivated" for translation, they carry some kind of semantic meaning, relevant to the bearer of the name. Of course, there is a scale on which the name can be expressive (as *Moaning Myrtle*, which in Hungarian became *Hisztis Myrtle*, referring to her tendency for tantrums) or suggestive (as *Voldemort* – where, even for those who do not speak French and thus do not know that it means "flight of death", the morpheme *mort-*, cf. *mortalis* or *mortal*, suggests the allusion to death; see Fernandes). Such words are relevant due to the effect they have on the audience (puns, wordplay, etc., as opposed to the semantic meaning).

Fictional words in general (as well as in *Harry Potter*) often carry important information. Be it a telling or loaded name, a spell or a creature, it is most often the meaning that gives a hint to the reader what to expect from the named person, creature or object. However, the question of content is complex: not only is the word able to convey the meaning directly, but sometimes, it also has culture-bound or intertextual associations that the translator has to preserve.

In the *Harry Potter* series, most names are reflections (and fictional re-interpretations) of English life: school, people, and even mythology. In the translation, this Englishness should not be left out of consideration; therefore, spelling has to make it clear that the characters and places are English.

2.1.1. LITERAL TRANSLATION

2.1.1.1. **Borrowing without changing spelling**

Naturally, for commercial reasons, Harry Potter's name could not have been altered, even if the initial 'h' sound was difficult (or impossible) to pronounce for many, for example Brazilian or French, readers (Fernandes, 2006). It was the same with several unloaded names for humans (e.g., *Hermione Granger*, *Rubeus Hagrid*); they were preserved, even though many of them have meanings. Unfortunately, there are certain words or names where the pun cannot be translated while preserving the pleasant sounding at the same time. Dumbledore's name, for instance, which means *golden bumblebee*, would have sounded quite silly translated into Hungarian as *Aranydongó* or *Dongodore* or something similar, referring to a professor, even if he is a bit 'cracky'. Translating the meaning of the word would have resulted in making the old professor seem unserious due to the funny sounding of his name. However, it is not the case in each translation to other languages. The Norwegian translator, for example, decided to transplant the meaning into Norwegian, and it resulted in Dumbledore becoming *Humblesnurr* (*humle* [bumblebee], *surr* [buzzing], *snurr* [nimble]; Goldstein, 2004). This shows how the translator's intentions and the characteristics of the target language influence the translation.

But not only conventional names remained in their original form. Certain telling names are not loaded in the sense that they have semantic meaning, but in that they carry certain associations. These connected thoughts may be based on intertextuality, or may derive from mythology (or other commonly known source), as the first name, *Minerva*, of the clever, strict professor, who is also the head of Gryffindor, which refers to the Roman goddess of wisdom and crafts. They may also sign gender, nationality (*Parvati* and *Padma Patil* are presumably Indian names), or class (*Sir Nicholas de Mimsy-Porpington*, see Fernandes, 2006). The aspect of intertextuality, due to lack of space, shall not be discussed here.

2.1.1.2. **Borrowing with changing spelling**

It has been mentioned that orthography is a key point in the reader's identification with the characters they are reading about; it might alienate the audience from the text if they struggle with reading out the name. Tóth judged Hagrid's giant younger brother's name, *Grawp* too difficult for the TL readers to pronounce; therefore, he borrowed the name but adopted the Hungarian spelling, thus became the name *Gróp*.

However, readability is not the only issue to take into consideration when changing spelling. Though it is not mentioned in the book explicitly, the names of the wizards connected to the other magic school, Durmstrang, suggest that they come from either Russia

or from other countries with Cyrillic alphabet. The English transcription of Cyrillic letters is different from the Hungarian tradition; therefore, such names were re-spelt as if borrowed from the original, thus Rowling's *Karkaroff* became *Karkarov* in the Hungarian translation, or *Wronski* (of whom a trick in Quidditch was named) became *Vronszkij*.

2.1.1.3. Calque

Calque is quite rare among the applied procedures in the case of the non-existent words, but some examples occur. The name of the wizards' main street,

Diagon Alley is turned into *Abszol út*, a pun on the word *abszolút*, the Hungarian 'equivalent' of *absolute* (just like the English term can be read as the deviation of the word *diagonally*). *Út* is the Hungarian for road, thus the translation is somewhat of a structural calque of the original phrase, which contains the word *alley*. (Minier, 2004, p. 160)

Both *diagon* and *abszol* are meaningless in themselves.

2.1.1.4. Literal translation

Some names simply refer to objects which are in some way associated with the character, as in the case of *Mad-Eye*, the old Auror, "a Dark wizard catcher" (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Chapter 11); a kind of "wizard-cop", who chases evil wizards and witches. His nickname refers to his special false eye, which is intimidating both to look at and to know about the capabilities of. Tóth simply translated it literally as *Rémszem* [horror-eye], which perfectly preserves the effect and meaning of the original. He chose the same method with the Minister of Magic, *Cornelius Fudge*, whose name was translated as *Cornelius Caramel*, where, together with conveying the primary meaning of the word, alliteration was created too.

2.1.2. OBLIQUE TRANSLATION

2.1.2.1. Equivalence

Names and other fictitious words sometimes do not carry semantic meaning relevant to the text, but the word still cannot be called a conventional name: it is often the form of the word that conveys information about or additional impression of the object it refers to. Think of the name of one of the four houses at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, *Hufflepuff*, which is not intended to convey the meaning, but it contains wordplay. In similar cases, the translator has to lay stress upon the formal issues rather than on meaning, even with the danger of losing some of the original content. *Hufflepuff* is an excellent example for equivalence, which recalls the collocation '*to puff and huff*'. But here, clearly, it is not the

propositional meaning which is of relevance. As keeping the meaning and the pun at the same time is impossible, it is preferable to preserve rather the pun. Therefore, the name had to be changed for something that also radiates the playfulness and childish overtones which are an important feature of the original. The Hungarian translation, *Hugrbug*, a play with the somewhat onomatopoeic word *ugrbugrál* [to gambol, to frisk about] (Minier, 2004, p. 159) with the original initial letter, is a perfect example to consider as an equivalent for the original wordplay.

2.1.2.2. Adaptation

Voldemort's real name poses an extremely difficult problem to the translator in every language. At the end of the second volume, *The Chamber of Secrets*, Voldemort's original name, *Tom Marvolo Riddle*, gives plenty for the translator to think about, as it not only refers to the mysterious personality of its bearer, but is also a riddle in itself: when the letters are rearranged, it turns out to be the anagram "that reveals the character's true identity" (Hatim & Munday, 2004, p. 11): *I am Lord Voldemort*. It is clear that Tóth needed to keep all the letters in the name that constitute the word *Voldemort*, and, as the Hungarian language contains several accented letters, which English does not, he had to pay attention not to include any of them, because it would alienate the character from the British plot. At the same time, he also had to come up with a surname that conveys somewhat of Voldemort's personality, but this was only of secondary importance: to maintain the anagram, as it directly appeared in the book, was necessary. The pun, however, appears in the name just more implicitly. Finally, Tóth chose the name *Tom Rowle Denem*, which can be turned into the sentence *Nevem Voldemort* [My name is Voldemort], and where the surname *Denem* is a play with the words *de* [but] and *nem* [no, not], which may refer to the fact that Tom became Voldemort, because he wanted to be special, and he did not want to be similar to others. This obstinacy may be reflected in the Hungarian version, though it could not live up (in terms of mystery) to the complexly witty original. This discrepancy resurges again in the first chapter of the fourth book: in Harry's real-dream the Riddle House (in Hungarian: "*Denem Ház*") appears as a long-abandoned, mysterious building, where once the owners were found dead, but the cause of death was strange: they seemed to be frightened to death on the same night. The Hungarian name, regrettably, does not convey the mystery that hovers around the building. On the other hand, the Hungarian translation does play on JK Rowling's name: Voldemort's middle name, *Rowle*, is based on the author's surname, which compensates for the loss (G. J. Tamási, personal communication, April 17, 2012).

If the translator decides to translate the word, the question arises whether to indicate the meaning by pronunciation or by spelling. (Here, the differentiation is similar to that of eye-rhymes and the general ones: the meaning indicated by pronunciation refers to when the wordplay or real meaning is only noticeable when pronounced, in the case of spelling-signed meaning when read.) For example, in the case of *Horace Slughorn*, the translator used *Horatius Lumpsluck*. In the last name, the *ck* ending is not to be pronounced as /tsk/, as it would be in a Hungarian word, but with a long /k/ sound. On the other hand, in the case of the teacher, *Wilhelmina Grubbly-Plank*'s name, the translator endeavoured to convey the meaning and the impression of Englishness at the same time; finally, he came up with the name *Suette-Pollts*, which is to be read out as *szúette polc* [worm-eaten shelf] in Hungarian. At the same time, it can also be disturbing for the readers who are familiar with English or other languages the orthography of which differs from the pronunciation (K. Szécsényi, personal communication, March 31, 2012). They are accustomed to utter the unfamiliarly spelt words differently from the Hungarian, and in this case, the readers who speak only Hungarian have an advantage over those who speak foreign languages. The pun will not be clear-cut at first sight for the latter ones, whose attention the pun may escape.

The surname of *Minerva McGonagall* is Scottish, which would have been lost in translation; therefore, Tóth decided to compensate for it with humour, creating the name *McGalagony*, which, “besides being easier to utter and more euphonious, also sounds potentially even more ‘English’ to the Hungarian ear than the original name” (Minier, 2004, p. 159). The Hungarian version is also an allusion to the famous Hungarian poem *Galagonya* [hawthorn or cockspur] by Sándor Weöres.

The question of phonaesthetics arises in the case of some non-human creatures. The caretaker's cat, *Mrs Norris*'s name, for instance, uses such imitative sound symbolism, as the name recalls the hissing noise an angry cat makes (p. 47). This, however, need not be changed, as the *-r*'s and *-s*'s resemble the hissing sound both in English and Hungarian.

Salazar Slytherin's name, who was one of the four founders of Hogwarts and who spoke the language of the snakes, is also based on phonaesthetic features. According to Fernandes (2006) “the initial cluster /sl/ ... [is] usually connected with “unpleasantness”. In *Harry Potter* the name of Salazar Slytherin ... follows this phonesthetic pattern” (p. 48) resulting in a negative connotation. Furthermore, Sytherin's name may be read as “sly therein”, which overtly reflects the personality of the character (D. Kiss, personal communication, 26 April, 2012). Tóth conveyed the meaning through both semantic and phonological features: the name in the Hungarian translation, *Mardekár Malazár* (*Mardekár*

meaning ‘bites-what-a-pity’) includes the morpheme *mal-*, which refers to Slytherin’s (or Mardekár’s) evilness. Though the translator dropped the *sl-* consonant cluster in the translation, he involved “dark-sounding” back vowels instead, thanks to which, “apart from the reference to snakes”, the name has “strong associative power” as well (Minier, 2004, p. 159).

2.2. COMMON NOUNS

2.2.1. WESTERN MYTHICAL CREATURES

The first problem based on culture-bound differences arises if the word used, though part of the common knowledge of the original culture, refers to non-existent creatures that are not an organic part of the target nation’s imagination. (Importantly, I do not wish to deal with words that have existing Hungarian equivalents, such as *unicorn* or *centaur*, as they are not lexical gaps in the Hungarian language and thus are not necessary to compensate for; this narrows down the set of words to be examined significantly.)

2.2.1.1. LITERAL TRANSLATION

2.2.1.1.1. Borrowing with changing spelling

The name of some creatures the essence of which is defined sufficiently and explicitly in the book is often borrowed. Tóth principally chose this operation when the creature was not a part of Anglo-Saxon tradition but was adopted from another culture. In these cases, the creature was unfamiliar to both the SL and TL language approximately to the same extent, so nothing motivated using another strategy. The Slavic mythological creature, *Veela*, for instance, was changed into *véla*, which accommodates to the Hungarian pronunciation.

2.2.1.2. OBLIQUE TRANSLATION

2.2.1.2.1. Adaptation

In the Harry Potter books, words like *banshee*, which refers to a creature that causes death with its scream, provided the translator with the problem of expressing an already existing phenomenon in a language where no lexical equivalent existed. Based on Koller (2004), translation depends strongly on a “double linkage” (p. 171), a link to the faithful conveyance of the SL text and the effect on the target audience, which means that, on the one hand, it must strictly rely on the source text and is also defined by the “*communicative conditions on the receiver’s side*”. From a linguistic-textual standpoint, the extra-linguistic circumstances, connotations, aesthetic features, language norms, and the target audience count as the most relevant equivalence-framework (p. 171). For English readers, the banshee is well

known. In Hungarian, however, keeping the original word in any way would have resulted in losing this knowledge. Therefore, the translator was forced to create a name that expresses the gist of the banshee. Thus, the Hungarian translator came up with the word *sikítószellem* [screaming ghost], which involves the action of screaming and connects it to the idea of the otherworld.

2.2.1.2.2. **Equivalence**

Another problem appears when both the original and the target language contain words that refer to non-existent creatures, but the phenomena they refer to are not sufficiently defined. For example, in English, *goblin*, *pixie* and *elf* could also be translated as *kobold* [goblin] or *manó* [elf], as there is no exact definition for either of them. As the translator cannot rely on the historical-cultural background of the target audience, the equivalence of the translation in these cases must be dependent on the translator's intuitions to distinguish these creatures according to the connotations the former use of the words and the sequence of sounds convey, in which the linguistic, aesthetic and stylistic features of the SL, TL, and translator play a relevant role (Koller, 2005, p. 172). (Finally, Tóth translated *goblin* as *kobold*, *elf* as *manó* and for *pixie*, he created a new term, *tündérmánó* [fairy-elf].)

2.2.2. COMMON NOUNS CREATED BY J. K. ROWLING

2.2.2.1. **Common nouns with Latin origins**

Words have an influence on the reader not only through their meaning or the intertextual or intercultural associations, but also through their **evoked meaning** (Baker, 2006). It means that the use of certain words, like those of different variations (be it geographical or class-related), makes the audience associate with that region, group of people, or era the word is peculiar to. Rowling creates the atmosphere of magic with the help of Latin words that contribute to the impression of earlier ages (together with the quills and the thousand-year-old castle), and she does it without resulting in the impairment of the understandability of the words she uses. As Nilsen and Nilsen (2006) note, "Latin roots are such a productive source of English words that Rowling does not need to provide a glossary, nor do most translators need to find replacements" (e.g., *Lumos*; p. 128). The integration of Latin words into the language is typical in English, but these words are much less an organic part of the Hungarian language. Therefore, Tóth had to decide which spells and words of Latin origin are comprehensible for the Hungarian readers and which should be replaced without losing the antiquated tone they originally carried. It can be said about the Latin-rooted words that in general, a much narrower range of strategies were applied than in the case of

other word types. If the original seemed understandable, and it was bearing Latin orthographical characteristics, it was borrowed with the same spelling; if it was adapted to the English spelling norms, Tóth also adjusted it to the TL orthography; and if it was considered to be incomprehensible, the translator exchanged it with another word with Latin origin that exists in Hungarian.

2.2.2.1.1. LITERAL TRANSLATION

2.2.2.1.1.1. **Borrowing without changing spelling**

Several spells and charms with Latin origin are understandable approximately to the same extent for the SL and the TL readers. In these cases, Tóth kept the original word, and, as the Latin orthography is not unfamiliar to the Hungarian language (at least not as different from it as from English), he also preserved the spelling. For example *Morsmordre*, a spell which evokes Voldemort's mark, the Dark Mark, consists of the Latin words *mors* [death] and *mordre* [to bite, stab] (Gáspár, 2003).

2.2.2.1.1.2. **Borrowing with changing spelling**

The same is the case with words referring to mental processes: words like *legilimency*, *occlumency* all include the morpheme 'ment-' (c.f. *mental*), which also exists in Hungarian, and the translator decided to Hungarianise the spelling only: the -y became -ia, and the -cc became -kk in the translation (*legilimencia*, *okklumencia*). The reason for the change in spelling may be that, according to the Hungarian writing rules, Latin words with identifiable endings (e.g., -tio (pronounced [tsio:])) are spelt according to their pronunciation (-ció), the same way as the spelling of such words with Latin origin adapts to the pronunciation in English.

Creatures that evoke mythological associations, and which attempt to imitate the spelling rules of words of Latin origin, like *bicorn*, which has a clear allusion to the fictional creature *unicorn* and plays with the prefixes *uni-* (meaning 'one') and *bi-* [two]. This, in Hungarian, based on the *unicorn–unikornis* pattern, became *bikornis*.

2.2.2.1.2. OBLIQUE TRANSLATION

2.2.2.1.2.1. **Equivalence**

When Tóth decided that the original word was understandable for the Hungarian audience, he found an equivalent expression which evoked the same meaning as the original. The SL expression *Expelliarmus* for the disarming charm, for example, consists of the words 'to expel', "meaning to send someone away from school" and 'armus', which "alludes to weapons" (Nilsen & Nilsen, 2006, p. 129). In Hungarian, these word roots do not exist, so in

the translation, the spell became *Capitulatus*, which is formed from the verb *kapitulál* [to capitulate]. Spelling *c* instead of the pronounced *k* helps evoking the same archaizing effect as the double *-ll* does in English. On the other hand, Tóth decided to preserve the light-spell *Lumos* in the translation, which presumes certain erudition from the TL audience (though it does not in the SL). This is the case with the *Foe-Glass* as well: the SL word (referring to a strange mirror which signs if its owner is endangered by enemies) is a compound consisting of two everyday words, while the Hungarian counterpart, *malíciamutató* ‘malice-indicator’ is slightly more difficult to understand for those who are not familiar with the word *malícia*, and thus, the word is foreignised from the Hungarian readers. However, it turns out from the context what the word means, so the reader does not miss the meaning, and even alliteration is created.

The translator changed the charm *Aparecium* (the one to visualise hidden or invisible things) into *Vizualicus* also based on the issue of understandability: the English word *appear* does not have a similar-sounding, semantically corresponding equivalent, so Tóth chose to emphasise the visual feature of the original with the help of a word (*vizuális* [visual]) that is almost as commonly known to the Hungarian readers as *appear* is to the English audience.

2.2.2.2. **Common nouns without Latin origins**

Many of those words which belong to this category are an arbitrarily chosen sequence of sounds. However, as Elekes (2002) notes, “no texts (or series of letters) can work without at least the illusion of sense, be it either the function of the text itself (i.e. the mimetic function) or the outcome of the reader’s expectation of sense” (pp. 174-175). With nonsense words, as she calls them, this illusion of meaning shall be in a way or other conveyed towards the audience. Although the meaning of these words (i.e., the object or creature they refer to) is clear-cut, where it was possible, Tóth also attempted to keep the pronunciation.

2.2.2.2.1. LITERAL TRANSLATION

2.2.2.2.1.1. **Borrowing with changing spelling**

The words which were made up by Rowling and which lack Latin origins are completely adjusted to the English spelling norms. These norms are different from the Hungarian ones to such an extent that Tóth had to change the spelling of these words. In these cases, he treated the non-existent words the way Weöres looks at the gibberish text in Carroll’s poem, where, as opposed to Tótfalusi’s *The Jabberwocky* translation (see 1.), “the

gibberish words ... were motivated, not conventional signs – acoustic words that sounded similarly in English and Hungarian. The target text-words differ from their English ‘originals’ only to the extent it is necessary for them in order to fit into the acoustics and grammatics of Hungarian language” (Elekes, 2002, p. 182).

The species names of supernatural creatures and phenomena, like the horse-like, winged creatures only visible to those who have encountered death, *Thestrals*, and the wizards’ most popular sport, *Quidditch*, the names were decided to preserve as much of the pronunciation as possible; therefore, Tóth chose to domesticate the spelling. Thus *Thestral* became *tesztrál* and *Quidditch* *kviddics*. Such words, which are arbitrarily chosen by the author to represent one thing or another, sometimes give the translator a difficult task. These changes in spelling alone can be argued for with the remoteness and strangeness of the English spelling for the Hungarian readers, and with the fact that no semantic considerations support their preservation. As the pronunciation remained more or less the same, the original effects on the reader did not change, but the new spelling is much closer to the Hungarian audience.

An issue relating to orthography is the **phonological features** of the word. What Elekes calls acoustic words, that is, those which seem to have no meaning, “may differ in different languages, as the acoustic system of the reader’s mother-tongue has an influence over their ‘Gefühlston’ [the tone of the feelings or emotional tone]” (2002, p. 183). (The gibberish words Elekes refers to differ from those made-up by Rowling in the sense that in the Harry Potter series, all such words have a well-defined, although often fictitious, meaning. However, the arbitrariness of the word choice and the motivation behind the strategy choice connect the two notions.) The set of phonemes used in different languages and the pronunciation rules may (and usually do) differ from language to language. It is also true for English and Hungarian. Therefore, when the orthography of a word is changed but its pronunciation is preserved, there must be some compromise between the corresponding sounds. For example, the English [θ] sound represented by the letter-combination ‘th’ does not exist in Hungarian, so it was replaced by a simple ‘t’. The same is the case with the reduced schwa [ə], which is unknown in the TL as a meaning-differentiating element, where all the vowels are fully pronounced: vowel reduction is a rule of English phonology, which weakens the vowels in unstressed syllables; however, such “weakening is not natural in Hungarian” (Nádasdy, 2006, p. 123). Accordingly, the original word *Thestral* (pronounced as [‘θestrəl]) was turned into [‘testra:l] in the translation.

It is also the differences in pronunciation that justify some changes in the form of words like *Muggle* [people without magic power], which, though does not have meaning, but “suggests several associations: with «mug», the slang word for «face» implicitly meaning «ugliness,» with «juggle», and with «bungle»” (Garcés, 2003, p. 127); or *Quaffle* for one type of the balls played with in *Quidditch*. In the case of these words, the Hungarian translator also chose to borrow the originals with some orthographical changes. The sound schwa does not exist in Hungarian, nor does the language allow any kind of consonants to be syllabic. Therefore, the words, despite of the vowels in the [-gəl] and [-fəl] endings, would be perceived as two monosyllabic words with a consonant cluster at the end. The Hungarian language does not allow word-final -gl or -fl clusters either, so Tóth decided to solve the problem in different ways. In the case of *Muggle*, he added a ‘syllable forming i’ to the end, and he decided to, instead of the vowel [ʌ], also unknown in Hungarian, emphasise the shortness of the syllable (and the orthography) rather than the sound features; he indicated in spelling that the -gg- is pronounced short, so it became *mugli* (pronounced [mugli]), which provides an additional wordplay evoking the Hungarian word *kugli* [skittles, bowling], resulting in an association to an amiable dumbness (G. J. Tamási, personal communication, April 17, 2012).

Tóth decided to find an alternative option to solve the *Quaffle*-problem, probably in order not to generate a humorous effect, which is justified for *Muggle*, as it has some pejorative connotation as opposed to wizards, but is out of place when talking about the wizards’ most important sport. Here, the translator simply omitted the final -le, re-spelt the word-initial Qu- as kv- and the result is *kvaff*. Probably due to the fact that the -ff is word-final here, the length of the syllable was kept by the double spelling (and in Hungarian, the pronunciation) of the consonants.

2.2.2.2.1.2. **Literal translation**

Some of the most frequently occurring common nouns which are compound words consisting of two “everyday” nouns, like *Mudblood*, are the easiest to translate literally. The pejorative word referring to wizards from Muggle families was literally translated as *sárvér(ű)*, and the phrase for the sweet *Sugar Quill* became *cukorpenna*. As all of them follow the same pattern, no further explanation or example is required here.

2.2.2.2.2. OBLIQUE TRANSLATION

2.2.2.2.2.1. Modulation

As it has been mentioned, modulation is quite rare among the translations of fictional words; however, there are some examples where Tóth decided to apply this procedure. A Remembrall is a magical ball which reminds its owner that he or she has forgotten something. *Remembrall* is a play with the words *remember* + *all* and *ball*. The wordplay is not that well-marked in the Hungarian translation, *nefeleddgömb* [don't-forget-ball], but the emphasis on the memory and concentration, together with the imperative, creates a similar humorous effect as the original.

Similarly, the gadget with the help of which its user can turn back time, the *Time Turner*, became *időnyerő* [time-gainer]. While the original focuses on the method the object applies, in the translation it is its use that is emphasised.

2.2.2.2.2.2. Adaptation

Adaptation is probably the most creative one among the translation operations; the translator, when constructing a new lexical element, has to take both the information to be conveyed and the features of the target language into consideration. For example, the word *Snitch*, which is a miscellaneous pun with the words *snitch* and *snatch*, is a really interesting one in the Hungarian translation. In English, the same word form can obtain the function of either a verb or a noun. Though in the fictional sense of *Snitch*, it is obvious that it functions as a noun, the semantic features of the similar-sounding words of all word classes are recalled. Furthermore, it can be taken as another form of pun during a Quidditch match: when being shouted in the heat of the game, it sounds as an imperative. In the Hungarian language, however, such finesse with word classes is impossible; word forms of the same origin but different word class do not overlap so strikingly due to the different endings required by the different word classes. Tóth; therefore, needed to use a noun form but he also wanted to maintain the impression of the verbal element. He chose the stem of the verb *cikázik* [to flash, to flit] and the nominal derivational suffix *-ász/-ész*, which gave out the word *cikász* invoking the meaning “something that flashes (through the sky, for example)” and blurred the border of the stem and the ending, which resulted in *cikész*. (Throughout the first edition of the first volume of the series, the word was, by accident, misspelt as *csikész*. In the further editions, this mistake was corrected.)

Sometimes, the translator could not give back the original meaning with one word. The name of the smelly, curious, treasure-searching, mole-like animal, *Niffler*, is a wordplay of several roots. The word *niff* refers to the smelliness of the creature, while the verb *sniffle*

expresses the inquisitiveness, and brings in the association of a sniffing dog, thus pointing out the fact that a Niffler searches for something. Furthermore, the word *sniffler* is a naval term for a short storm, which may be connected to the fact that these creatures turn everything upside-down. All these meanings could not have been possible to transfer into Hungarian in one word; Tóth; therefore, came up with the untranslatable name *orrontó furkász*: the word *orrontó* is a pun for *megorront* ‘to nose out (a secret)’, implying the term being ‘nosy’ and *orr* ‘nose’ plus *ront* ‘to burst’ and ‘to spoil, to ruin’, referring to the stink, adding the suffix *-ó* to it. *Furkász* is a mixture of the words *turkál* ‘to burrow’, *furkál* ‘to dig’, and the derivational suffix *-ász*. Here the translator plays with the morphemes and morpheme boundaries, thus creating a playful, complex, yet easily understandable meaning.

3. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The translation of words that refer to non-existent creatures and objects raises several peculiar problems. The translator has to find the closest, already existing concept or be creative and give back as much from the original meaning of the word and its effects on the reader as possible in their own way. If it is not possible, they are bound to make a compromise and decide which features are of the most relevance, and according to their decision, they have to create new words and expressions. There are several variations for how to solve these difficulties, with particular attention to the cultural features and the “linguistic-stylistic structure and [the] meaning potential” not only in the original but also in the target language (Koller, 2004, p. 172). By all means, the translator has a huge role in founding the readers’ interpretation of the text, and they are provided a large set of means to choose from. “It is up to the translator ... whether to interpret gibberish as a group of sounds that has nothing but acoustic quality, or as a transformed, restorable version of a language” (Elekes, 2002, p. 183).

In this paper, my aim has been to examine the lexical operations, linguistic and extra-linguistic factors that contributed to the linguistic solutions to fictional words in the Hungarian version of the Harry Potter series, and to form a taxonomy is that suitable for the translation of words referring to non-existent phenomena. As a basis, I used Vinay and Darbelnet’s taxonomy together with the steps offered by Garcés, thus making difference between borrowing with and without change in orthography, and expanded it by grouping the word types. I differentiated between proper nouns and common nouns, and further distributed common nouns based on whether they had already existed but constituted a lexical gap in the

target language or were made up by the author. Finally, I distinguished two subtypes of the made-up words, those with and without Latin origins.

As it can be seen in the Appendix, not all translation strategies defined by Vinay and Darbelnet (1995/2004) appeared at all in the translation of words that imply a lexical gap between the original English text and the Hungarian language. As all the examined words were nouns or noun phrases, transposition was not an option for Tóth to apply. Apart from this, modulation and calque were the rarest operations: the nouns examined offered opportunity for modulation in exceptional cases only; most of them did not have a definable opposite. The case of calque is obscure: the border between literal translation and calque is so vague that it was not always clear whether to include some examples into one or the other category. However, most of them seemed closer to literal translation, so apart from the structural calques, the others were rendered literal translation. The other strategies are more common with the examined words, but they appeared in different frequency based on the type of the word. Among literal translation types, borrowing without modification in spelling is the one that was applied for every word category, while it was adaptation and equivalence among oblique translation strategies which were universal (with only one exception in both cases). As it can be seen in the table, proper nouns provided a more varied range of translation strategies, where all literal translation types were applied, as well as the oblique type, adaptation. This shows that translating common nouns is more restricted than translating proper nouns, because a common noun is more closely connected to its bearer, as the name is the primary source of the information about the characteristics of the object. When talking about proper nouns, however, the name only gives additional aspects to the personality of the character.

Probably, the most interesting set of words was the common nouns created by Rowling. The translation solutions here are diverse, and the division of words of Latin origin and those of non-Latin origin seems to be justified by the difference in the applied methods. In the case of Latin-originated words, Tóth always preserved the Latin origin, sometimes (when the elements constructing the word were considered understandable for the Hungarian readers) only adapting the spelling to the Hungarian norms. On other occasions, when he judged the message was not completely comprehensible, or there was a different message (as in the case of *Accio*), he found an equivalent for it, and Latinised the orthography.

With common nouns without Latin origins, the translator used half of the strategies. Those operations which were omitted seem to be justified by the nature of these words: at borrowing, spelling adaptation was inevitable due to the English spelling norms, and, most of

the procedures were adopted. Transposition and calque has been explained; and as there is no equivalence for the made-up words, this option is also eliminated.

My aim has not been to provide a translation corpus-based analysis on the Hungarian translation of the Harry Potter series, but to examine and to assort the translation operations Tóth applied during the process of translating words referring to non-existent phenomena. However, examining the translation of such words could be an interesting topic for further research.

Tamás Boldizsár Tóth, the translator of the Harry Potter series came up with extremely ingenious solutions for words without TL equivalent, sparing himself neither time nor fantasy to create new expressions, thus enabling the Hungarian readers who do not understand English to comprehend all the linguistic playfulness and the complex semantic content the English audience receives. He took several issues into consideration that arise when meeting fictitious words: semantic and linguistic, as well as cultural elements, and achieved that the series is not only understandable but enjoyable as well.

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APPENDIX

Summary of the translation strategies for non-existent phenomena applied by Tóth

STRATEGIES		Proper nouns	Common nouns		
			Western mythical creatures	Nouns created by J.K. Rowling	
				Latin origin	No Latin Origin
Literal translation	Borrowing without changing spelling	✓		✓	
	Borrowing with changing spelling	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Calque	✓			
	Literal translation	✓			✓
Oblique translation	Transposition				
	Modulation				✓
	Equivalence	✓	✓	✓	
	Adaptation	✓	✓		✓