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The Controversy Surrounding Proper Names, Voids and Neologisms in the Hebrew Translations of *The Lord of the Rings* as a Manifestation of Norm Change

Abstract

The Lord of the Rings trilogy by J. R. R. Tolkien was translated into Hebrew twice. The first translation, by Ruth Livnit, was published in 1979-1980, and the second one, by Emanuel Lottem – in 1998. Following the publication of the second translation, a controversy arose mainly over the way in which names were translated. The readership who preferred Livnit's translation did not accept Lottem's and demanded that the publishing house reprint the first one. This study examines the controversy over the translation of names, which includes three issues dealt with within the framework of translation studies: proper names, voids and neologisms. The concept of "translational norms" as developed by Toury, on the one hand (Toury, 1977; 1995), and Chesterman (Chesterman, 1993), on the other hand, serves as a key concept in this study.

Fifteen names central in the controversy were selected based on their frequency of appearance on websites, forums and blogs containing a significantly large number of users and lasting for significantly long periods of time. In order to determine the translational problem posed by each name (proper name? void? neologism?) and to identify the translation strategies implemented to translate it, each name was subjected to analysis. The controversialists′ responses to the translational choices were also examined, as they appeared on websites, forums, blogs and newspapers.

The study reveals certain translational solutions characteristic of each translator: Livnit – omission, disregard of a source feature, transliteration; Lottem – explicitation within and without the text. The explanation for these discrepancies lies largely in the fact that Lottem tried to render the names according to Tolkien's instructions as they appear in the *Guide to the Names in The Lord of the Rings* written by Tolkien himself (Tolkien, 1975), whereas Livnit's rendering of the names corresponds less to those instructions, and even when it does, it is probably by chance. Trying to render the names according to Tolkien's instructions, Lottem's translation resulted in many occurrences of adequate translational solutions; this is because Tolkien had often instructed translators to retain the names (in the terminology of translation studies: either transference or transliteration / transcription), and since the main function of proper names is identification, transliteration / transcription is an effective strategy which preserves this function, bringing the translation closer to adequacy. A tendency towards an adequate translation was also observed in other translational choices made by Lottem. He preserves a phonological resemblance to the source names even when he does not transcribe them.

In contrast, Livnit's translation revealed translational solutions lacking adequacy, such as omission, disregard of a source feature and substitution of names by replacements which do not preserve a phonological resemblance to the original. Livnit's prevailing tendency towards acceptability is reflected in names deriving from Hebrew sources, such as the Talmudic name "Ben-Lilith", "Bnei-Lilith". Literal translation, using existing words from the target language, might reflect tendencies towards acceptability as well, and Livnit implemented this strategy more often than Lottem. Morphological adaptation might also reflect tendencies towards acceptability and this strategy too, was implemented by Livnit more often than Lottem. Since the "initial norm" of acceptability in Hebrew literary translation weakened during the twentieth

century, giving way to the adequacy norm which gradually replaced it (Toury, 1977; Weissbrod, 1989), one can derive that Livnit's translation corresponds to more outdated norms.

Despite the differences, there are certain translational strategies implemented in both translations (transcription, literal translation, neologisms, substitution, morphological adaptation). It might be that the partial overlap between the translational strategies exists because the norms governing name behavior did not change steadily and there are certain translational strategies that operated continuously throughout the twentieth century. Transliteration / transcription, in particular, reflects a long-standing norm that replaced the norm of using Hebrew names, which had prevailed during the Enlightenment period (Friedman, 2010: 96, 211, 244-245).

In accordance with the norm differences found between the two translators, norm differences between Livnit's supporters and Lottem's were also revealed. The demand for the names to sound appropriate in Hebrew is a common one among Livnit's supporters. In terms of translation theory, they prefer the names to show a tendency towards acceptability. In contrast, Lottem's supporters provide supporting arguments in his favor, which manifest a tendency towards adequacy rather than acceptability. According to them, Livnit's translational choices allude to Judaism, which do not correspond to those of the source text, and interfere with the English atmosphere the reader is supposed to feel. In Chesterman's terminology (Chesterman, 1993; 1997), the "expectancy norms" of Livnit's supporters have not changed at the same rate as the "professional norms", changes which are visible in Lottem's translation. Among Lottem's supporters, however, there is no such gap between the "expectancy norms" and the contemporary "professional norms". This may account for the controversy between the two groups.

In accordance with the partial similarity between the translational strategies, there are also similarities between the two groups. Supporters on each side demand primarily that Tolkien's instructions be respected. The controversialists often debate over the translational choices which best match (if at all) Tolkien's instructions, and over the translation which best matches the source text. This suggests that controversialists on both sides want the translator to seek adequacy. The support for the transcription strategy, shown by controversialists on both sides, except by purists and conservatives, can be explained by the fact that this was a common norm throughout the twentieth century (Friedman, 2010: 211).

However, on both sides there are those opposing transcription and translational solutions created by implementing this strategy, whether by Lottem, or by Livnit. They believe that the instructions for translation written in the *Guide to the Names in the Lord of the Rings* are intended for translators into Germanic languages, and translators into other languages do not have to abide by them. In this context, there are controversialists on both sides who prefer translational solutions created by using strategies other than transcription, whether by Lottem, or by Livnit, since they are meaningful for the Hebrew target-audience. This shows that a tendency towards acceptability exists among controversialists on both sides.

Despite agreeing in principle on certain issues, there was great involvement in the controversy over a long period of time (from 1998 to 2010). Although the target readership's demands were not answered and the publishing house did not reprint the first translation, Livnit's translation remained in consciousness due to the very controversy, the long period over which it took place, the websites, forums and blogs where Livnit's supporters kept using Livnit's translational solutions, the publication of newspaper articles (although less frequently in comparison to using websites) and social gatherings during which they argued over the two translations. This study demonstrates

the readership's involvement in establishing translational norms and it may serve as a starting point for further studies that will link professional norms with expectancy norms.