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## Crumpets or Cakes?

The Translation of Culture-specific Items in Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

Bachelor's project in Lektor in English

Supervisor: Annjo Klungervik Greenall

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## 1 Introduction

The Harry Potter series written by J.K. Rowling is loved by many and translated into many languages (Eilertsen, 2019). In this short study, I will be looking at one of the Harry Potter books and the translation of culture-specific items into Norwegian. Culture-specific items are those items that are not easily translatable into other languages (Aixelá, 1996, p. 57). Because culture-specific items are not easily translatable, they are also interesting to study. The translation of culture-specific items, or CSIs, depends much on the source language and the target text (Aixelá, 1996, p. 57), and the translational strategies may vary from language to language, and item to item.

The book I will be focusing on is the first in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997). Here I will look for the items that are specific for the British culture, and not the wizarding world, in chapter 12, *The Mirror of Erised*. This is a chapter describing the celebration of Christmas at Hogwarts, where we are introduced to different kinds of food and terms connected to the British boarding school system. As for the translation, I will be looking at the Norwegian *Harry Potter og De Vises Sten* translated by Torstein Bugge Høverstad (2005). The goal of this study is to see how the translator of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* into Norwegian has dealt with the culture specific items of the book, both looking at the procedures that have been used and whether they are seen as domesticating or foreignizing.

## 2 Theoretical background

Toury (2012, p. 5-7) claims that translations should not be studied prescriptively, but descriptively. Within descriptive translation studies (DTS) the translated texts should not be looked at as if they were made in a vacuum but be seen in the context they are made. The translator must be aware of the culture into which they are translating and decide on the strategies based on this. In DTS, translations are studied in connection with the systemic position and function of the text, which are seen as determining factors in the choice of translational strategies (Toury, 2012, p. 5-7).

CSIs are those terms that are not easily translatable into a language (Aixelá, 1996, p. 57). What is seen as culture-specific items (CSIs) depends on the text, the source language and the

target text (Aixelá, 1996, p. 57). Something that is seen as a CSI in one target language may not be seen as one in another language. We can, according to Aixelá, divide CSIs into two categories: proper nouns, and common expressions (1996, p. 59). Proper nouns would here be the names of the characters in the book and the names of places and buildings. Common expressions are all the other cultural items that are not proper nouns, namely “the world of objects, institutions, habits and opinions restricted to each culture” (Aixelá, 1996, p. 59). In this study I will be focusing on common expressions.

A number of previous studies have looked at the translation of CSIs in the Harry Potter series. In the article *A Goblin or a Dirty Nose*, Eirlys E. Davies has focused on the translations of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* into German and French. She has also focused on the translation of culture-specific items. This study looks at the different strategies that have been used in the translation of Harry Potter into these languages and draws the conclusion that there is no consensus between translators on which procedures should be used in different cases (Davies, 2003, p. 96).

Davies (2003) points out that there are, to her knowledge, no translations that have gone for a strategy of completely removing the text from its source culture. No translator has made a claim that the text is an original either, it is always clear that the target texts are translations. What differs is the translation procedures that have been made to make the text comprehensible for children from the target culture (Davies, 2003, p. 72). Davies finds that there is no one to one relation when it comes to the choice of translation procedures. One term can be translated using one procedure in one language and another in a different language. Translators also do not use just one translation strategy throughout the text. When it comes to foreignization and domestication, Davies does not see a correspondence between these categories and the procedures used (2003, p. 96-97).

Another study that has been made concerning culture-specific items in Harry Potter is the paper *Fred or farīd, bacon or bayḍun ('egg')? Proper Names and Cultural-specific Items in the Arabic Translation of Harry Potter* by Mussche and Willems (2010). In their study they focus on proper names and food in the translation of the three first Harry Potter books into Arabic (Mussche & Willems, 2010, p. 474). In many Arabic countries children's literature has a low cultural status, and the reading of secular literature is discouraged (Mussche & Willems, 2010, p. 475). Children learn to read classical Arabic like what can be found in the

Koran. Children's literature should also promote Islamic moral values and translations can therefore be changed to fulfil this (Mussche & Willems, 2010, p. 475).

Studying the translations of Harry Potter into Arabic shows that there are differences in the Arabic countries when it comes to the acceptability of translational freedom (Mussche & Willems, 2010, p. 476). What they find to be mostly used in the translations of CSIs in these books is a neutralising strategy involving omission, hyperonymic translation and replacement of names by common nouns (Mussche & Willems, 2010, p. 495). In omission words or whole phrases are left out of the translation, whilst in hyperonymic translation a word is translated into a more general word. They see these translational strategies as more foreignizing than domesticating (Mussche & Willems, 2010, p. 495).

Munday (2016) has done a small case study about the translations of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* into Spanish and Italian. This case study gives an illustration of how to use Toury's three-phase methodology. In the first step he looks at the book covers and the title pages of the books to establish whether it is clearly visible that these books are translations or not. In these examples you can see on the title pages that these are translations, but it is otherwise not very clear that they are translations. When it comes to who the books are marketed for, the Italian translation calls it a *romanzo*, meaning novel, indicating that this is a book for adults. The Spanish translation on the other hand states that this is a book for "all children of all ages" (Munday, 2016, p. 191). This case study focuses mostly on the names in the book, which I will not do, but concludes that the Spanish translation is more ST-oriented while the Italian is more TT-oriented (Munday, 2016, p.192-193).

The studies that have been presented here show that the treatment of culture-specific items in translation varies. There is no one to one correspondence between a CSI and a translating strategy. Different cultures and translators deal with the same CSIs in different ways. This will be compared with my study as well.



## 3 Method

### 3.1 Data

I will be looking at the first book in the Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and its translation into Norwegian, *Harry Potter og de Vises Stein*. We are here introduced to the wizarding world and the life of Harry Potter both inside and outside the world of magic. Many culturally specific items can therefore easily be identified in this book. The culturally specific items I will be looking at are the ones that are specific for the British culture in general, and not for the wizarding world. To narrow down my search I have decided to look at chapter 12, *The Mirror of Erised*. This chapter has been chosen because of the abundance of culture-specific items. We are here introduced to the celebration of Christmas at Hogwarts which brings up many kinds of food, and words that are associated with the school system, amongst other culture-specific items. I have in chapter 12 identified 22 CSIs which are presented in the table in my analysis.

### 3.2 Analysis

My study will be a Descriptive Translation Study (DTS) following Toury's three-phase methodology. This involves first placing the target text into its proper cultural context, then comparing the target text with the assumed source text. In this phase, I will look for coupled pairs and the procedures that are involved in the translation of these pairs. From the analysis of the coupled pairs, an attempt at a generalization of the translation procedures can be made (Toury, 2012, p. 31-34). To place a translated text into its proper culture the function and status of the text in the target culture must be established (Toury, 2012, p. 21-23). The identified coupled pairs will be analyzed using Aixelá's methods of translation when looking at cultural items. Davies (2003) finds Aixelá's terms insufficient and difficult to use and has therefore come up with her own procedures. These are closely related to Aixelá's own terms. I understand her criticism, but for my short study both her terms and Aixelá's terms are sufficient, and I have therefore chosen to stick with Aixelá's terms.

When it comes to translations of CSIs, Aixelá divides the scale of translation into two main groups, namely conservation and substitution. Conservation includes the translation strategies that aim to conserve the cultural aspects in translations while substitution aims to move the translation from the source culture into the more relatable target culture (Aixelá, 1996, p. 61). The two groups are again divided into sub-categories of translation that are placed on a scale

“from a lesser to a greater degree of intercultural manipulation” (Aixelá, 1996, p. 61). I will not use the terms orthographic adaptation, extratextual gloss, synonymy, and autonomous creation, but they are presented here so the reader can easily compare them.

In conservation we have repetition, orthographic adaptation, linguistic (non-cultural) translation, extratextual gloss and intratextual gloss. In repetition, as much as possible of the original reference is kept intact in the target text. Orthographic adaptation involves “procedures like transcription and transliteration” (Aixelá, 1996, p. 61). In linguistic (non-cultural) translation the translator uses pre-established translations or make “use of the linguistic transparency of the CSI” (Aixelá, 1996, p. 61) but make them into a target language version. With extratextual gloss an explanation of words is given by the translator, making it clear that they are explanations. Lastly, with intratextual gloss words are described but less noticeably, they are more part of the text (Aixelá, 1996, p. 61-62).

Substitution includes synonymy, limited universalization, absolute universalization, naturalization, deletion, and autonomous creation. In synonymy “the translator resorts to some kind of synonym or parallel reference to avoid repeating the CSI” (Aixelá, 1996, p. 63). Limited universalization involves replacing a culturally specific item (CSI) with another that is more familiar in the target culture. In absolute universalization the CSIs are replaced by a more neutral reference. In naturalization the translator tries to bring the CSI into the “intertextual corpus felt as specific by the target language culture” (Aixelá, 1996, p. 63). Deletion means omitting words in the target text, and lastly, autonomous creation involves adding cultural references that do not exist in the source text (Aixelá, 1996, p. 63-64).

Aixelá’s terms will then be put into Venuti’s two categories of translation: domestication and foreignization. Domestication is a strategy of “bringing the author back home” and foreignization a strategy for “sending the reader abroad” (Venuti, 2008, p. 15). By this it is meant that in domestication words that are not easily understood in the target culture are changed into something more easily relatable, while in foreignization the text is more closely related to the culture of the source text. Because conservation aims to conserve the cultural aspects in translation it would be natural to assume that these procedures will give a foreignizing effect, while substitution would give a domesticating effect due to the procedures’ aim to move away from the source culture and into the target culture. This will be looked at in my analysis.

## 4 Analysis

### 4.1 Situating the translation in its cultural context

According to the publisher of the Harry Potter books in Norway, Cappelen Damm, *Harry Potter og de vises stein* is seen as our time's greatest classic when it comes to children's literature (Cappelen Damm, n.d.). The Harry Potter books have been translated into more than sixty languages and are loved by many (Eilertsen, 2019). In Norway *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is translated by Torstein Bugge Høverstad. He has received prizes for his translations of the Harry Potter books: Bastianprisen for his translation of *Harry Potter og de Vises Stein* and Det Norske Akademis literature prize for his translations of all the Harry Potter books (Cappelen Damm, n.d.).

In his review of the Harry Potter books, Tor Åge Bringsværd comes with a warning to potential readers of the books: they are addictive (Bringsværd, 2008). It is impossible to put down the books, and if you have first read one of them you have to read the rest just to see what happens. He points out that they describe the inner life of boarding schools which has always been exciting to read about, and points to the Norwegian series about Stompa. The books are, in his view, suitable both for children and adults (Bringsværd, 2008).

When looking at the book cover there is nothing that indicates that this is a translation. The only name that is printed on the front page is J.K. Rowling, the author of Harry Potter. Only when you open the book and look at the title pages you see that this book has been translated by Torstein Bugge Høverstad. On the back cover there is a quote from the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* stating that this is "A wonderful, mystical and magical world for readers of all ages" (Translation by me), giving an indication that this is a book for everyone. It is a book that you can read to your children and you can enjoy it yourself. This might give an indication of how the book will be translated. It will have to be written in a language that is suitable and understandable for children of all ages.

### 4.2 Identification of coupled pairs and their shifts

In the table I have presented the 22 coupled pairs that I have identified from chapter 12 of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. The first column shows the ST items, the second

shows the TT items, the third the translation procedures that have been made, and in the fourth I have identified the translations as being domesticating or foreignizing. Below the table I will give a reasoning for my choice of procedure and foreignization/domestication. For this explanation I have chosen one from each of the procedures that falls under domestication, and one from each that falls under foreignization.

<b>ST</b>	<b>TT (Norwegian)</b>	<b>Procedure</b>	<b>Foreignization/ domestication</b>
(1) Several feet (p. 143)	En drøy halvmeter (p. 181)	Limited universalization	Domestication
(2) Turnips (p. 147)	Blomkål (p. 186)	Limited universalization	Domestication
(3) Frog-marched (p. 149)	Marsjerte (p. 189)	Deletion/limited universalization	Domestication
(4) Holidays (p. 145)	Ferien (p. 183)	Absolute universalization	Domestication
(5) Crumpets (p. 146)	Kaker (p. 185)	Absolute universalization	Domestication
(6) High table (p. 149-150)	Lærerbordet (p. 189)	Absolute universalization	Domestication
(7) Common room (p. 143)	Oppholdsrommet (p. 181)	Naturalization	Domestication
(8) Toasting fork (p.146)	Spidd (p. 185)	Naturalization	Domestication
(9) Chipolatas (p. 149)	Løkpølser (p. 189)	Naturalization	Domestication
(10) Trifle (p. 150)	Fromasj (p. 190)	Naturalization	Domestication
(11) Head Boy (p. 155)	Topptillitsmann (p. 195)	Naturalization	Domestication
(12) Dormitory (p. 146)	Sovesalen (p. 185)	Linguistic translation	Domestication
(13) Christmas cake (p. 150)	Julekake (p. 190)	Linguistic translation	Domestication

(14) Professor (p. 143)	Professor (p. 181)	Repetition	Foreignization
(15) The Great Hall (p. 143)	Storsalen (p. 181)	Linguistic translation	Foreignization
(16) Festoons of holly and mistletoe (p. 144)	Girlandere av kristtorn og misteltein (p. 183)	Linguistic translation	Foreignization
(17) Prefect (p. 149)	Prefekt (p. 188)	Linguistic translation	Foreignization
(18) Cranberry sauce (p. 149)	Tranebærsaus (p. 189)	Linguistic translation	Foreignization
(19) Flaming Christmas puddings (p. 150)	Flammende julepuddinger (p. 189)	Linguistic translation	Foreignization
(20) House Cup (p. 155)	Huspokalen (p. 195)	Linguistic translation	Foreignization
(21) Fifty-pence piece (p. 147)	Halvpundsmynt (p. 186)	Limited universalization	Foreignization
(22) A tea (p. 150)	En ettermiddagste (p. 190)	Intratextual gloss	Foreignization

(1) I see as limited universalization. Officially Britain uses the metric system like the rest of Europe, but in some cases still use the imperial measures like *feet* that is used here (Visit Britain, n.d.). In Norway the metric system is what is used, and *feet* is not a term that is familiar to most Norwegians. Therefore, I see this as domestication.

(3) Here the word *frog* has been deleted from the translation, and the term has been translated into *marsjerte*. To *frog-march* someone means to drag them by their arms (Collins dictionary, n.d.), in Norwegian å *marsjere noen ut* is similar, but does not give the exact same connotation. I have also identified this as limited universalization because the term has been replaced by a more general word that could also be used in English.

(4) I see as absolute universalization. The word *holiday* in English refers to a vacation based on a religious event. In the Norwegian translation this has been translated into the more general term *ferie* which denotes a vacation of any sorts. It would also be more natural to use this general term in Norwegian than in English, which makes it a domestication.

(7) I see as naturalization because *common room* could be translated into *fellesrom* which would mean a room that is for everyone, but the translator has here used a term that gives more the feeling of what it really is, *oppholdsrom*, a place where you stay in your free time. This is a more relatable and understandable term for Norwegians, and I have therefore categorized it as domestication.

(12) is a linguistic translation because it is a pre-established translation of the term. I see this as domestication because a *dormitory* is not something that is very familiar to Norwegians, and especially not in the context of everyday life at school, but most know what a *sovesal* is from being at camp or on school trips. I see this as domestication because it gives the reader a visual of what the term is even if it is not the exact same thing.

(14). Here the use of the word *professor* has been repeated in the translation and is therefore a case of repetition. I see this as a foreignization because in Norwegian the word *professor* is used for someone who works at a university or college, while Hogwarts is more like a middle school/high school where Norwegians would use the term *lærer*. Calling someone by their profession is also not usual in Norway, instead teachers and professors are called by their first name.

(15) I see as a linguistic translation. A *Great Hall* was a room usually found in mansions and castles in medieval times (Cartwright, 2018). Now it can also be a room used for dining in colleges and other buildings (Britannica, n.d.). It is often found in Great Britain. This is something that is not as usual in Norway, and the word *Storsal* is not something that gives the same associations as *Great Hall* would give for the British. It gives a sense that it is a big hall, but not that it is a room for meals.

(21) I have identified as limited universalization. Here the term *pence* has been translated with a different term for money in Britain, *pound*, but in the Norwegian form *pund*. To make this change the term *fifty* must also be changed into *half* or *halv* which it is translated into. This is still something that will be foreign to many, but it might be a bit more familiar to some, I therefore see this as foreignizing.

(22) I see as a translation with intratextual gloss. Here the word *ettermiddags* has been added in front of *tea* giving an in-text explanation showing it is not just a cup of tea, but a concept of its own. A *tea* in Britain is not just a cup of tea, but a meal enjoyed with a cup of tea. This is not a concept that would be familiar to most people in Norway, and I therefore identify this as foreignization.

### 4.3 Generalization

In this chapter of the book, I have identified thirteen cases of domestication and nine cases of foreignization. This points to a slight trend towards domestication in this book.

Domestication contains three translations identified as limited universalization, three identified as absolute universalization, five as naturalization and two as linguistic translation. Foreignization contains one repetition, six linguistic translations, one limited universalization and one intratextual gloss. The translator has aimed to keep the source culture but has changed the items that are most foreign and unrecognizable to Norwegians into something that can be easily recognized.

## 5 Discussion

The goal of this study was to see how the translator of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* into Norwegian has dealt with the culture specific items of the book, both looking at the procedures that have been used and whether they are seen as domesticating or foreignizing. There is no one procedure that has been used to translate all the items that I found, but there is a slight tendency towards domestication in this translation. The target group of this book are children of all ages, which would demand a translation that is easily understandable for that age group.

Young children have less experience and know fewer of the culture-specific items that can be found in a foreign culture than adults might know. This can be seen as one of the reasons for the translator to aim for a more domesticating and TT-oriented translation. Many foreign items can still be found in the target text which gives the reader a sense that this is happening in a different country. The translator has made a translation that can easily be understood by the target audience, but still wants to keep the culture of the source text visible. Not only does

this keep the setting of the story in a foreign country, but it reinforces the sense of magic and mystery to the reader of the translated text.

While I found this translation to be mostly domesticating, Mussche and Willems (2010) found the translation into Arabic to be more foreignizing. In the Arabic translation they found that many of the food items were omitted or changed into something that is more general than what is found in the source text. This in contrast to what I found in the Norwegian translation gives a more foreignizing feeling. In the Norwegian translation most of the words were kept in the text, but either translated into something else that fits into the Norwegian culture like what we see in (4) in the table or translated in a way that keeps the source culture intact like we see in (19) in the table. It seems that the strategy of foreignization into Arabic is a bit unusual and that this is something special in the Harry Potter translations, but the omission or hyperonymic translations could point to the Arabic culture in which the Islamic moral values are strong. Food items that are not allowed in their culture are omitted or changed into something more general, while in Norway there are no such food items that are not allowed.

In Munday's case study (2016), instead of the terms foreignization and domestication we see the terms ST-oriented and TT-oriented. ST-oriented would mean keeping the translation close to the source text while TT-oriented would mean bringing it closer to the target culture, the focus is on the target text. The Spanish translation like the Norwegian translation is marketed more for children than the Italian, which could indicate that the same type of translation strategy would be used, but this does not seem to be the case. The Norwegian translation I found to be more TT-oriented like the Italian translation. This shows that the translation strategy seen as suitable for one target audience in one culture may not be seen as suitable in another culture even if the audience is of the same age.

Foreignization and domestication encompass the different translational procedures that have been identified. Davies (2003) finds that there is no procedure that is always foreignizing or always domesticating, this depends on the context of the translation being made. From my analysis of the translations that I found there seems to be some procedures that give a foreignizing effect and some that give a domesticating effect. The items that have been translated using naturalization, absolute universalization, and deletion I have found to be domesticating. Limited universalization, linguistic translation, repetition, and intratextual gloss are, in most cases, categorized as foreignizing. This could suggest that these procedures



are specific for each of the categories, but the fact that there were so few of most of the procedures makes it impossible to draw a conclusion from it. Naturalization and linguistic translation are the procedures that have been used most in chapter 12 of the book, and the finds point strongly towards naturalization being a domesticating strategy while linguistic translation is mostly, but not always, a foreignizing strategy. Linguistic translations give translations that are pre-established. This means that they are often known to users of the target language, but they may not always be the most natural translations and could in some cases be seen as domesticating and in others as foreignizing.

## 6 Conclusion

This study has been aimed at finding the strategy used by the Norwegian translator Torstein Bugge Høverstad in his translation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* into *Harry Potter og de Vises Stein*. Even if this study has been a small one, and only looking at one chapter of the book, there has been a small tendency towards domestication. But because only one chapter has been analyzed this could give a false tendency that is not the same throughout the book. To get a clearer picture of the translation strategies that have been used in the book, more of the book should be analyzed.

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