

## PROBLEMS IN TRANSLATING THE NAMES OF DOG BREEDS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF DIFFERENT NOMINATION PRINCIPLES AND LINGUISTIC RELATIVITY

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The paper analyses selected terms from the perspective of linguistic relativity. It examines how the speakers of English, Lithuanian, and Russian perceive similar phenomena, how this specific perception is reflected in the linguistic nomination, and what difficulties this difference may cause for a translator. The analysis has demonstrated that some dog breeds are grouped differently in given languages, which presents certain problems of translation. The translator must possess considerable knowledge of cynology vocabulary or seek for a professional advice in order to produce a correct translation of dog breeds from English into Lithuanian and Russian, and vice versa.

**Keywords:** theory of language relativity, translation difficulties, cynology, nomination principle, breed names borrowings, nomination method, dog breed names.

### Introduction

The *problem* discussed in this paper is the differences of nomination principles in English, Lithuanian and Russian and the way in which these differences affect the process of translation of selected terms. In the course of this paper, the nomination is examined from the perspective of linguistic relativity. Namely, it is examined by which means the speakers of English, Lithuanian, and Russian perceive similar phenomena, through what this specific perception is reflected in the linguistic nomination, and what kind of difficulties this difference

may cause for a translator. The key nomination principle of English words discussed within the scope of this paper is compounding, as compounds illustrate the principles of linguistic relativity and its reflection in the process of nomination at its best. The *aim* is to determine the pattern used in the process of nomination of certain compound terms of selected fields, namely cynology, and to observe the difficulties of translation of selected compounds conditioned by the different nomination principles in English, Lithuanian, and Russian. The *objectives* are: 1) to select English compound terms

referring to different dog breeds and types from various sources and to provide their translations into Lithuanian and Russian; 2) to determine the principle of nomination for each compound or for the group of compounds through the prism of linguistic relativity and the differences or the similarities of nomination in the given languages; 3) to determine the existing or potential difficulties of translation caused by different nomination principles.

The analysis consists of two parts. The first part presents the overview of a theoretical basis and the scope of the analysis, including the main theories used as the background for research and the overview of the problem of a multilingual terminology of selected fields. The second part covers the analysis of the cynological terms, namely the names of dog breeds and varieties.

## **Theoretical basis and the scope of the analysis**

### ***Concepts of nomination and linguistic relativity***

According to Czech linguist František Čermák, the language nomination can “broadly mean a language name (form) for an item of extralinguistic reality or mental content”, and draws “either on morphemes [...] and their combinations or words and their combinations (in most languages)” (Čermák 2002). Lithuanian author Rūta Žukaitė mentions the tendency of a language nomination based on a word formation to employ a certain trait (not necessarily the most important one) of a particular object of reality as a basis for a newly formed denomination. She also notes that the reality can be perceived slightly differently depending on various factors, and it can influence the nomination itself – the principle of nomination of the same object of reality in different languages can differ or match, and the more traits the object possesses, the more variations in nomination can be found (Žukaitė 1980).

The latter conclusion goes in line with the theory of linguistic relativity formulated by

the American researchers Franz Boas, Edward Sapir and most significantly by Benjamin Lee Whorf (Marina 2003) and known as “Sapir-Whorf hypothesis.” Stuart Chase, in his foreword to Whorf’s “Language, thought, and reality” summarizes the theory of the latter as follows: “Speakers of different languages see the Cosmos differently, evaluate it differently, sometimes not by much, sometimes widely. Thinking is relative to the language learned” (Whorf 1959). According to Valerija Marina, “linguistic relativity is a complicated multilevel and multidimensional phenomenon referring to the relations between language, thought, experience (reality) and culture” (Marina 2008). In her study on the linguistic relativity, Marina notes that “at the level of the picture of the world described by individual languages relativity implies that every language presents its own picture different in many ways from the others. This in turn results from various handling of the same “pieces of reality” by different languages” (Marina 2008), and cites Boas who has analyzed many examples in order to demonstrate “how a given experience would be differently rendered in various languages or how a set of experiences would be differently grouped (classified) by different languages” (Boas 1966: 146–147).

This paper presents an attempt to analyze the key points determining the nomination principles in the selected English, Lithuanian and Russian terms within the framework of above mentioned theory, presuming that the choice of different constituents as parts of given terms is based on the different worldview of the speakers of each language which enables them to give preference to different traits of an object of reality during the process of nomination.

In order to provide concrete analysis of selected terms, the scope of the research of the differences in nomination has been narrowed to the names of some dog breeds. Although this field – the terminology of cynology – is not considered highly important in comparison to, for example, legal or medical terminology, there is still a demand for a clear, fixed, stable multilingual nomenclature. Recently both hunting and

cynology have turned into widespread leisure activities in both Lithuania and Russia, not to mention English-speaking countries where these hobbies are well-known for centuries. Both professional and amateur cynology develop rapidly as well, which includes the need for strict breed nomenclature of cynological book publishers, dog-related commercials, kennel clubs, organisations, et cetera. Unfortunately, neither bilingual nor multilingual official dictionaries on cynology have been issued up to this day, and the only multilingual dictionary of hunting terms which appears to include some nomenclature related to hunting dog breeds is the “Dictionary of Hunting”, published in 1997 following the initiative of Gediminas Petruzis. The dictionary comprises circa 600 words and expressions in five languages (Lithuanian, English, Russian, German and French). The names of dog breeds were selected by the author from different resources, including the abovementioned “Dictionary of Hunting”, the online databases of The Fédération Cynologique Internationale (the world’s largest canine organisation) and The Lithuanian Cynological Society (National member of FCI), the online dictionaries, as well as from books on cynology and hunting published both in Lithuanian and Russian.

### The analysis of translation difficulties conditioned by the different nomination principles

#### *Analysis of the names of dog breeds from the perspective of different nomination principles and linguistic relativity*

*Breed names with a hound constituent.* The definition of an English term *hound* according to *Oxford English Learner’s Dictionaries* (2016) is “a dog of a breed used for hunting, especially one able to track by scent”. However, the other definitions include also “a domestic dog of any of various breeds commonly used for hunting, characteristically having drooping ears, a short coat, and a deep resonant voice”

(The Free Dictionary 2016), “a dog of any of numerous hunting breeds including both scent hounds (as the bloodhound and beagle) and sight hounds (as the greyhound and Afghan hound)” (Merriam-Webster English Dictionary 2016), as well as simply “a dog” (The Free Dictionary 2016). According to *English Etymology Dictionary* (2016), the meaning of Old English word *hund* (originally *a dog*) had narrowed to *a dog used for hunting* in circa 12<sup>th</sup> century AD. Despite the narrowed use, the term *hound* in the English language still can be attributed to a relatively wide class of hunting dogs. The closer survey shows how the term is used in the process of nomination of separate breeds.

Four ways of nomination using the *hound* constituent can be found in English:

1. The nomination according to the object of hunting, e.g. in *Foxhound*, *Otterhound*, *Coonhound*, *Staghound*, *Deerhound*, *Wolfhound*, et cetera.
2. The nomination according to the way of hunting, e.g. *Sighthound* (a hound that hunts and pursues game by sight rather than by scent), *Scenthound* (a hound that hunts and pursues game by scent rather than by sight), *Bloodhound* (a hound that is used for tracking both by scent and blood track) (Merriam-Webster English Dictionary 2016);
3. The nomination according to the place of origin, e.g. *Polish Hound*, *Tyrolean Hound*, *Serbian Hound*, *Finnish Hound*, *Afghan Hound*, et cetera (FCI 2016).
4. The singular case of unknown nomination pattern in *Greyhound* – the word which 1) refers both to a separate breed of sight-hounds which has developed in the territory of Britain and is known nowadays as *Greyhound*, 2) is used as a synonym of a *sighthound* in general in some cases (as in *Polish Greyhound*, *Hungarian Greyhound*, *Spanish Greyhound* (FCI 2016). According to *The English Etymology Dictionary* (2016), the etymology of “grey” constituent is not clear, although it has nothing to do with colour.

Translation problems frequently arise while dealing with the abovementioned words because the nomination patterns in both Lithuanian and Russian are entirely different from that of the English language. Both Lithuanian and Russian separates the above-mentioned hunting breeds according to a different nomination principle. There is a clear distinction between the hounds which are used for hunting the prey by scent (Lithuanian *skalikas*, Russian *гончая*) and the hounds which pursue the prey by sight (Lithuanian *kurtas*, Russian *борзая*). Moreover, there is a clear morphologic distinction attached to the abovementioned terms in either Lithuanian or Russian. *Skalikas* or *гончая* refers to a hound characteristically having drooping ears, short coat, and a deep, resonant voice while *kurtas* or *борзая* defines a sinewy, slender, long-legged dog which can

develop very high speed. All breed variations within each abovementioned category must be attributed according to a particular group. Thus, for example, the speakers of English may talk about a sighthound breed called *whippet* using the word *hound*, and this would not be a mistake as in English both scenthounds and sighthounds are actually *hounds*. On the contrary, the attempt to use the same pattern while referring to a *whippet* either in Lithuanian or Russian can result in a mistake, as the speaker must make a clear division between the two separate meanings of *hound* and to choose whether he calls the whippet *skalikas* (Russian *гончая*) or *kurtas* (Russian *борзая*). The former will be a mistake as the connotation of a *whippet* in either Lithuanian or Russian is strictly limited to an English *sighthound*, that is Lithuanian *kurtas* and Russian *борзая*.

Table 1. The comparison of English, Lithuanian and Russian dog breed names with “hound” compound” (sources: Petružis 1997; LKD 2016; Sabaneev 1992; Navasaitis, Pėtelis 1998; Mazover 1985; FCI 2016; LKSK 2016)

No.	English term	Translation into Lithuanian	Translation into Russian
1.	Hound	<i>Skalikas</i> <i>Kurtas</i> <i>Kurtai ir skalikai</i> <i>Medžioklinis šuo</i>	<i>Гончая</i> <i>Борзая</i> <i>Борзые и гончие</i> <i>Охотничья собака</i>
2.	Sighthound	<i>Kurtas</i>	<i>Борзая</i>
3.	Greyhound	<i>Greishaundas</i> <i>Kurtas</i>	<i>Грейхаунд</i> <i>Борзая</i>
4.	Deerhound	<i>Dirhaundas</i> <i>Škotų kurtas</i> <i>Elninis šuo (Petružis 1997)</i>	<i>Дирхаунд</i> <i>Шотландская борзая</i> <i>Оленья борзая</i>
5.	[Irish] Wolfhound	<i>[Airių] volfhaundas</i> <i>[Airių] vilkogaudis</i>	<i>[Ирландский] волкодав</i> <i>Ирландская борзая</i>
6.	Scenthound	<i>Skalikas</i> <i>Pėdsekys</i>	<i>Гончая</i>
7.	Bloodhound	<i>Kraujasekis</i> <i>Bladhaundas</i>	<i>Гончая по кровяному следу</i> <i>Кровяная гончая</i> <i>Бладхаунд</i>
8.	Staghound	<i>Elninis skalikas</i> <i>Skalikas elniams medžioti</i>	<i>Стэсхаунд</i> <i>Оленегонная гончая</i>
9.	Foxhound	<i>Fokshaundas</i>	<i>Фоксхаунд</i> <i>Лисогон</i>
10.	Otterhound	<i>Ūdrinis skalikas</i>	<i>Оттерхаунд</i> <i>Выдровая гончая</i>

The abovementioned distinction and the choice of nomination pattern are remarkable if observed from the perspective of linguistic relativity. While the English language uses the object of hunting, the way of hunting or the place of breed's origin as a basis for the nomination, the nomination pattern in Lithuanian and especially in Russian is more diverse, as illustrates Table 1.

Some examples to explore:

- a) In the Russian language, sighthounds bear a common name *борзая* – the term which highlights the ability of these dogs to develop a very high speed on the run. The famous Russian cynologist Sabaneev notes in his monograph on hound breeds that the name *борзая* is derived from the word *борзый*, meaning *fast* and assigned in the old days to horses only (Sabaneev 1992: 8; BTS 1998). According to Sabaneev, it points to the main quality of the breed. Interestingly, in English, the accent is put on the other quality of these dogs, namely their ability to hunt by sight (*sighthound* or *gazehound*). Lithuanian word *kurtas*, according to data from various resources provided by *Lithuanian Etymology Dictionary*, may have been the loan from Slavonic languages (Polish *chart*, Russian *хортая борзая*) (LEŽD 2016). Sabaneev mentions the word *kurtzi* as used by one of the ancient chroniclers while describing the hunting dogs of The Duke of Moscow, suggesting that it is of the Tartar origin, although the etymology is unknown (Sabaneev 1992: 55). Therefore, the Lithuanian *kurtas* are not based on any specific known traits of the dog itself, which is understandable, as, according to Sabaneev, the ancient Lithuanians hunted the big game only (bisons, moose, wild boars, bears) and thus preferred strong hunting dogs over the slim and fast ones. Therefore, sighthounds were uncommon in the Baltic region and the necessity of any particular nomination within the

framework of the language's own lexical means did not arise; instead, the loaned Slavonic word was incorporated.

- b) The breeds of hounds used for hunting by scent bear a common name *гончая* in Russian. The inner form of the word suggests that the main quality of these dogs which determined the choice of nomination base is their ability to pursue the prey relentlessly for a long time (Russian *гон, гнать* – *to chase, to pursue*) with a long, deep, vibrant howling bark (*гоньба голосом* – *a chase with a voice*) (Sabaneev 1992: 150–151). The same nomination pattern – highlighting the specific sound produced by these dogs during the pursuit of prey – can be seen in Lithuanian word *skalikas*, which highlights “their most distinctive feature – the peculiarity of their voice, a bay during the pursuit of prey” (Medžiotojų ir žvejų draugija 1968: 248). Again, as in the previous section, this pattern of nomination is totally uncommon in English – there is no distinction of the above-mentioned types of dogs according to either their speed or the peculiarity of their voice.

The above-mentioned nomination patterns result quite frequently in translation mistakes, as a translator must make a distinction between different types of hounds while translating these terms into Russian and Lithuanian.

As discussed above, the most difficult task for a translator in the course of translating English compounds with a *hound* constituent into Lithuanian or Russian is to understand whether the *hound* constituent in this particular word indicates the type of a scenthound dog or a sighthound dog and to translate accordingly. The quotation belonging to Benjamin Lee Whorf is very eloquent in this context: “You might think that “tree” means the same thing, everywhere and to everybody. Not at all. The Polish word that means “tree” also includes the meaning “wood.” The context or sentence pattern determines what sort of object the Polish word (or any word, in any

language) refers to.” (Whorf 1959: 259) The very same pattern is applicable to the English word *hound*, and the task of translation is hardly possible without a deeper research into this particular field.

The most characteristic example is the pair *deerhound* – *staghound*. The first constituent of both compounds is synonymic (stag is a male deer, especially a male red deer after its fifth year) (Oxford English Learner's Dictionaries 2016), and the second constituent is the same one. Thus, the direct translation based on the meaning of each constituent becomes hardly possible. According to Sabaneev, the confusion related to the translation of these two breed names into Russian has been known for a long time (Sabaneev 1992: 32). Correct translation requires knowledge of the purpose for which each of these two breeds has been used. Only then it becomes clear that the slender light-built dolichocephalic *deerhound* which hunts by sight should be referred to as *kurtas* in Lithuanian and as *борзая* in Russian and the heavy-built *staghound* which is used to hunt the deer by scent or blood trail is *skalikas* in Lithuanian and *гончая* in Russian. These difficulties related to different nomination principles has led to a wide use of borrowings in the translation of the names of dog breeds (Lithuanian *dirhaundas*, Russian *дирхаунд*), as it helps to avoid translation mistakes and to prevent the perversion of the meaning. An interesting case can be found in the *Dictionary of hunting* (1997) which translates the word *deerhound* as *elninis šuo* in Lithuanian and *оленья собака* in Russian – presumably, out of inability or unwillingness of the translator to identify whether the *hound* constituent in this particular term defines a sighthound or a scenthound. The translation of *hound* as simply *a dog* is possible (see Table 1), although it must be admitted that some meaning is lost in this particular case, and the target language reader is unable to discover which breed was originally meant in the source language text. However, in case of *Pharaoh Hound* the interpretation of the *hound* constituent as a *dog* is

correct – the equivalence would be *faraonų šuo* in Lithuanian and *фараонова собака* in Russian (LKD 2016).

The similar confusion may occur in regard of the pair *wolfhound* – *wolf-dog*. The temptation may arise to translate both words as *vilkinis šuo* or *vilksūnis* in Lithuanian and *волчья собака* in Russian. However, *wolfhound* actually refers to a sighthound which in Lithuanian bears the name of *vilkogaudis* in the case of domestication (LKSK 2016) or *volfhaundas* (LKD 2016) in the case of borrowing and *волкодав* in Russian. Remarkably, both Lithuanian and Russian words highlight the specific ability of the above-mentioned dog *to catch* (from Lithuanian *gaudyti*) or even *to kill* (Russian *давать*) a wolf, while the English name only indicates the wolf as an object of hunting with these particular hounds.

**Wolf-dog vs. Vilksūnis.** Another interesting nomination case which may present a certain difficulty to a translator is a specific Lithuanian nomination of a certain kind of domestic dogs called *vilksūnis* in Lithuanian. Lithuanian *vilksūnis* is a compound derived from *vilkas* + *šuo* (English *wolf* + *dog*). Thus, it may seem that the translation of the term is an easy task as the very same words compose the English compounds *wolf-dog* or *dog-wolf*. However, the case is much more complicated, as these seemingly identical compounds refer to different phenomena in Lithuanian (especially colloquial) and English languages.

The *Oxford English Learner's Dictionaries* give the following definition of a *wolf-dog* (or *dog-wolf*): “a hybrid between a domestic dog and a wolf”. Practical use of the compound, as in *American Wolfdog*, “*Czechoslovakian Wolfdog*”, “*Saarlooswolfdog*” (FCI 2016) fully corresponds to its definition – it is used to name an established dog breed or a crossbreed that contains a certain amount of a wolf's blood.

The *Contemporary Dictionary of Lithuanian Language* defines *vilksūnis* as *vilkinis šuo* (DLKŽ 2016), thus retaining the ambiguity as it is not clear whether *vilkinis šuo* (which can be translated literally as *a wolfish dog*) refers to



a dog who has a wolf among its ancestors or to a dog which simply has some external features which may be attributed to a wolf (coat colour, general appearance, et cetera). Generally, the meaning of the abovementioned term should be the one that fully corresponds to the English term *wolf-dog* – a wolf-dog hybrid. The community of professional cynologists, including the Lithuanian Cynological Society, supports the principle of nomination for these breeds adopted in English. The online database of Lithuanian Cynological Society gives the following translations: *Czechoslovakian Wolfdog* – *Čekoslovakų vilkšunis*, *Saarlooswolfdog* – *Sarloso vilkšunis* (LKD 2016). Unfortunately, the case of *vilkšunis* remains complicated, as, besides its professional use adopted within the professional cynological community, it also has another meaning which beyond all comparison exceeds the scope of use of the official one. In colloquial Lithuanian *vilkšunis* generally refers to dogs belonging to the breed officially called *vokiečių aviganis* (English *German Shepherd Dog*, German *Deutscher Schäferhund*, Russian *немецкая овчарка*), as well as to any other dog which resembles the abovementioned breeds in appearance or has any of them among the ancestors. According to the Lithuanian corpus developed by Vytautas Magnus University, the word *vilkšunis* appears 39 times in publicist writings and 32 times in fiction texts (DLKT 2016). The collocates confirm that the use of the term *vilkšunis* rarely refers to its supposed meaning as a mix of a dog and a wolf or the established breeds of wolfish origin like *Czechoslovakian Wolfdog* and *Sarlooswolfdog*, but, on the contrary, indicates ordinary domestic dog – a shepherd or a dog resembling the latter in appearance.

In the Russian language, the use of any similar pattern as in Lithuanian *vilkšunis* for the nomination of a German Shepherd Dog or the dogs of similar appearance type is unknown. The Russian language nominates a wolf-dog phenomenon in the same way as it is done in English, thus, there are such terms as *волчья собака* in official breed names, colloquial *волконец* or

*волкособ* when referred to a cross between wolf and dog, or *волкообразная собака* (Kalinin 1992: 9) if referred to a dog with specific wolfish external characteristics. However, the dogs colloquially named *vilkšunis* in Lithuanian usually are denominated in Russian as mere sheepdogs or their crosses – *овчарка*, *метис овчарки*, colloquial *овчароид*.

In this particular case, the adopted Lithuanian nomination principle seems unique in comparison to English and Russian. The phenomenon of a prickle-eared shepherd breed or its mixtures is equally present in all three countries, but only Lithuanian language developed the generalized term for it. Even if the use of the word *vilkšunis* is considered to be very colloquial, non-professional and misleading (as dogs called *vilkšunis* – *wolfish dog* in Lithuanian in most cases have nothing to do with wolves), still it is widespread, and its connotation for the speakers not involved in professional cynology is very clear.

If observed from the translator's perspective, the nomination phenomena discussed above presents certain difficulties. The translation from English into Lithuanian and from Russian into Lithuanian is not of a particular difficulty as the principles of nomination, in this case, do match. English *wolf-dog* has its equivalence of *vilkšunis* in its meaning of *a wolf-dog cross*, while *German Shepherd Dog* or *sheepdog* are translated accordingly as *vokiečių aviganis* or *aviganis*; the same translation pattern is valid for Russian (*wolf-dog* – *волчья собака*, *German Shepherd Dog* – *немецкая овчарка*, *sheepdog* – *овчарка* or *пастушья собака* in some cases). However, the translation of Lithuanian *vilkšunis* either into English or Russian may require the explicit knowledge of the context, the understanding of nomination principle used in this case, and the right idea of the described phenomenon itself. In some context, the Lithuanian word *vilkšunis* must be translated as *wolf-dog* while in other cases it may be necessary to translate it as either *sheepdog*, *German Shepherd Dog* or even to use a paraphrase like *a dog of wolfish appearance*.

## Conclusions

1. The detailed observation of selected English hunting terms and their translation into Lithuanian and Russian showed that different languages in some cases use different traits of a particular phenomenon in the process of nomination, which corresponds to the theory of linguistic relativity. The choice of different traits of a single object of reality for the purpose of nomination makes it impossible to use word-for-word translation and urges to look for an appropriate equivalence in each language.
2. The analysis of English, Lithuanian and Russian names of selected dog breeds had demonstrated that some dog breeds are grouped differently in given languages, which presents certain problems of translation. The translator must possess considerable knowledge of cynology vocabulary or seek for a professional advice in order to produce a correct translation of dog breeds from English into Lithuanian and Russian, and vice versa.
3. The need for a professional thematic bilingual or multilingual dictionaries of cynology exists, as the presence of such resources would provide a significant assistance to translators who work with texts related to the field of cynology, as well as to those who deal with cynology terms daily.

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## ŠUNŲ VEISLIŲ PAVADINIMŲ VERTIMO PROBLEMOS SKIRTINGŲ NOMINACIJOS PRINCIPŲ IR KALBOS RELIATYVUMO POŽIŪRIU

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Darbe nagrinėjami nominacijos būdų skirtumai kalbų reliatyvumo teorijos kontekste ir šių skirtumų sukelti vertimo sunkumai. Analizei atlikti parinkti šunų veislių ir porūšių pavadinimai anglų kalba. Pateiktas jų vertimas į lietuvių ir rusų kalbas, atlikta lyginamoji kiekvieno termino analizė. Analizuojant atsižvelgiama, kuris to paties tikrovės objekto (šuns) požymis tampa pavadinimo pamatu kiekvienoje iš kalbų. Atitinkamai nustatoma, kokių vertimo problemų gali kilti verčiant pateiktą tikrovės objektų pavadinimus, kurių nominacijos būdas skirtingose kalbose nesutampa.

Tyrimo metu nustatyta, kad šunų veislių pavadinimai anglų kalboje itin dažnai sudaromi remiantis visai kitais tikrovės objektų požymiais nei rusų arba lietuvių kalbose. Vertėjas turi teisingai suvokti tikrovės objektų nominacijos principus, dėl kurių tam tikri pavadinimai skirtingose kalbose gali įgauti platesnę ar siauresnę reikšmę.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** kalbos reliatyvumo teorija, vertimo problemos, kinologija, nominacijos principas, pavadinimų skolinimas, nominacijos būdas, šunų veislių pavadinimai.