

# «LIGHT» IN J. R. R. TOLKIEN AND IN THE PORTUGUESE TRANSLATION

## A LEXICAL ANALYSIS

### 1. Introduction

«Untranslatability» is a favourite theme for language relativists. Many people use two or more languages in their daily lives, and one language often seems more suitable in a certain situation than another — it is presumably easier to discuss electronics in English than in the language of some nomad tribe. However, when language is used for expressing more subjective notions, to claim that one language is «richer» than another smells of chauvinism. One reason I was attracted to the theme referred to above was because I had heard such claims made in relation to it, and felt that the only way to come to a fair conclusion would be through a more thorough examination of the subject.

The intention of this paper is to contribute a little to the understanding of the complexity of this problem of untranslatability by analysing how one author uses the vocabulary of a particular lexical field and how his translator saw fit to render his choice into Portuguese<sup>1</sup>. This will, of course, provide only a limited view of the problem, and one which will favour the language of the original rather than that of the translation, but it will at least provide a starting point which could lead to further studies of other authors and their translators.

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<sup>1</sup> a) TOLKIEN, J. R. R. — *The Lord of the Rings*, Vol. I of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Revised 2nd. edition. 6th Impression, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1971.

b) TOLKIEN, J. R. R. — *O Senhor dos Anéis - I - A Irmandade do Anel*. Tradução de Fernanda Pinto Rodrigues, Mem Martins, Edições Europa-América, Coleção Século XX, N.º 180.

## 2. Language and lexicons

It used to be a commonplace to say that the lexicon had suffered neglect in the mainstream of linguistics theory in recent years, but this was not entirely true. It would possibly be more appropriate to say now that it is thanks to recent developments in general linguistic theory that the full complexity of the lexicon has come to be appreciated. Nowadays linguists are more preoccupied with the way meaning, semantics, is inextricably intertwined with form, syntax, and how both are also heavily dependent on context. Being aware of these facts does not help one to concentrate purely on one area or another, but this paper proposes a lexical analysis and so, certain theoretical constructs, no matter how imperfect, will have to be used to discuss the problems perceived here.

### 2.1. Lexical fields

The general concept of «lexical fields» is by no means new, dating back perhaps to the 18th century<sup>2</sup>. The exact meaning of this concept has been discussed over the years, but perhaps the definition by Lyons is suitable for our purposes:

«The set of lexemes in any one language system which cover the conceptual area and, by means of the relations of sense which hold between them, give structure to it is a lexical field.»<sup>3</sup>

It is a useful general concept for the lexicologist although the word «field» is perhaps a little misleading for some, giving as it does a certain map-like connotation that would lead one to ignore the way in which lexical fields tend to overlap with other fields apparently nowhere «near» them even in the denotative senses, let alone the

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<sup>2</sup> LYONS, John — *Semantics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, pp. 250-1.

<sup>3</sup> LYONS, John — *Op. cit.*, p. 254.

connotative ones. In this paper this will become obvious as, although an attempt has been made to restrict investigation to the lexical field of «light», it is impossible to draw rigid lines<sup>4</sup>. However, one does not have to be a linguist to understand that certain words belong to the same general area of meaning and the idea of lexical fields has a certain psychological reality for all of us. Both Portuguese and English appear to have well developed concepts of light but the lexemes used in the different languages do not conform to exactly the same «map».

## 2.2. Componential Analysis

This form of analysis was developed by the Structuralists and «rests upon the thesis that sense of every lexeme can be analysed in terms of a set of more general sense-components (or semantic features), some or all of which will be common to several different lexemes in the vocabulary»<sup>5</sup>. At first, great hopes were entertained by the universalists that all meaning could be categorised according to a universal set of components of meaning but, as Adrienne Lehrer points out:

«if a semantic feature is to be universally valid, it must be so vague that it has to be defined for each language or group of languages.»<sup>6</sup>

This does not stop the technique of componential analysis being very useful for the type of work proposed here. It is particularly useful for the analysis of words considered in isolation and from the point of view of their denotative meaning. It is less useful for describing connotative semantic features unless the collocation or context is taken into account in individual instances.

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<sup>4</sup> LEBORANS, Maria Jesús Fernández — *Campo Semântico y Connotación*, Málaga, Editorial Planeta, 1977. This author explores the complex connotations associated with *light* and *darkness*.

<sup>5</sup> LYONS, John — *Op. cit.*, p. 317.

<sup>6</sup> LEHRER, Adrienne — *Semantic Fields and Lexical Structure*, Amsterdam, North-Holland, 1974, p. 170.

### 2.3. Denotative and connotative meaning

For the purposes of this paper denotative meaning is taken to be that meaning, or combination of meaning components as used in componential analysis, attributed to a lexeme considered when it is found in isolation as, for example, in a dictionary. Connotative meaning will be taken as that which the same lexeme can only acquire in a specific collocation or context. As we shall see, this distinction is not as easy to make when discussing the particular lexical fields under consideration as it may appear.

### 2.4. Collocation. Co-text and Context

Collocation is a notion introduced into linguistics by Firth as part of his overall theory of meaning. He proposed to deal with lexical meaning, in whole or in part, at a level of analysis intermediate between the situational (or contextual) and the grammatical. Words, he maintains, tend to co-occur in texts, for example, «dark» will often co-occur with «night»<sup>7</sup>.

The concept of «co-text» as used in this paper will also echo opinions of the Firthian school. The actual text, written or otherwise, in which the lexeme occurs, is usually taken to be the co-text<sup>8</sup>, whereas context takes into account the interpersonal, cultural and social background relevant to the situation.

## 3. Descriptive language

### 3.1. Descriptive texts

When a language teacher talks about «descriptive» texts, he will normally be referring to the type of text that not only gives information about a specific situation, place, person, state of mind,

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<sup>7</sup> LYONS, John — *Op. cit.*, p. 612, citing FIRTH, J. R. — *Papers in Linguistics*, 1934-1951, London, Oxford University Press, 1957, p. 197.

<sup>8</sup> HALLIDAY, M. A. K.; HASAN, Ruqaija — *Cohesion in English*, London, Longman, 1976, p. 301.

or whatever, but does so in a way in which the writer or speaker's value judgements on the subject are freely expressed. Such texts are usually rich in adjectives and adverbs, and the choice of nouns and verbs will also reflect personal evaluation. Appreciation of such language will, to a large extent, depend on how far the reader or listener shares the same personal and cultural values as the author or speaker. The translator must not only be able to interpret these values, he will also have to transmit them through the target language, no easy task.

I am not, of course, suggesting that one can easily divide texts into objective and subjective types. Totally objective language is, according to some philosophers, an impossibility and, logically, a totally subjective text would be understandable only to the person producing it and, therefore nonsense, or «nontext»<sup>9</sup>, to everybody else. Language is for communication and therefore, however personally we wish to use language, we must use it in the way that the consensus of opinion of our audience deems suitable if we are to be appreciated, or even understood. The evaluative components present in descriptive texts are selected by the author of the text, but they form part of the linguistic and cultural context in which they are uttered.

### 3.2. Descriptivity at the level of lexemes

Mary Snell-Hornby raises the problem of the evaluative components present in individual lexemes, or, specifically, in individual verbs<sup>10</sup>. Her work was originally prompted by the untranslatability already referred to, and she found that it was not always easy to confine the treatment of these verbs within the type of theoretical constructs given above. Using verbs taken from a wide but carefully chosen selection of semantic fields, she demonstrates that many verbs not only refer to an action but simultaneously deliver a value-judgement on that action.

Within the context of a larger project to examine the semantic fields of «light» and «darkness», this paper proposes to concentrate

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<sup>9</sup> HALLIDAY, M. A. K.; HASAN, Ruqaiya — *Op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> SNELL-HORNBY, Mary — *Verb-descriptivity in German and English. A Contrastive study in Semantic Fields*, Heidelberg, Carl Winter, Universitätsverlag, 1983.

only on «light», and yet I hope to show, however inconclusively, that there is a case for suggesting that value judgements are to be found at the level of the lexeme, the collocation, the co-text and the context.

#### 4. The choice of text and translation

Choosing the first text on which to base this work, together with a reasonable translation, was not easy. The aim was to find an author whose vocabulary was wide, whose use of words was well-informed without being contrivedly «literary» and yet someone with a personal interest in linguistic values. After examining several texts and their translations, J. R. R. Tolkien's work seemed to be the most suitable for the purpose.

##### 4.1. J. R. R. Tolkien

J. R. R. Tolkien was Professor of Middle English at Oxford for many years and was well-known for his translations of Middle English texts into modern English. However, he is better-known to the world as the creator of several best sellers depicting a rich fantasy world which owes a lot to his considerable knowledge of Northern European mythology. When I first read these books, one of the things that interested me was his obvious preoccupation with language. Many examples could be cited, but here it is of interest to note that he was at pains to describe the world he was creating. Several factors point to a Northern European countryside, and among them are his descriptions of light effects. So preoccupied is he with this that at one point his hero, confronted with the wonderful world of Elves, has the following linguistic problem:

«A light was upon it for which his language had no name»<sup>11</sup>. Perhaps his preoccupation with light and dark was also connected with the fact that he also enjoyed painting pictures of his imaginary world. He wrote his books primarily to entertain his children so, although obviously the possessor of a vast vocabulary and the master of various styles, he was interested in being easily intelligible.

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<sup>11</sup> TOLKIEN, J. R. R. — *Op. cit.*, p. 365. Tradução, p. 378.

## 4.2. The translator

I know nothing about the translator but her name, Fernanda Pinto Rodrigues. However, although this is a difficult book to translate and, whatever decisions were taken, somebody would disagree with this or that, she has often attempted to convey certain nuances, both in the lexical fields under consideration and in others, which lesser translators would have simply ignored.

## 4.3. The texts

When considering Tolkien's work from the point of view of vocabulary, it is presumed that it is acceptable not only to one average native speaker but to a large number of them, given the popularity of his work. To argue about the correctness or otherwise of a particular choice of word would both violate his rights as a creative writer and question his authority as a professor of English.

Translations, however, are always subject to criticism. Those who speak both languages but whose mother tongue is that of the original will question whether the translator has interpreted the author's meaning properly, while those whose language is that of the translation may be more worried about the acceptability of its linguistic and literary style.

As a native speaker of English I shall restrict myself to comments on how the English text has been interpreted.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1. Collection of examples

The first procedure was to go through the original and the translation recording every reference to effects of light and darkness, whether denotative or connotative. When collecting lexemes in this way, the end result tends to be a mixture of different parts of speech — verbs, adjectives, nouns and adverbs — but on examining each lexeme, it soon became apparent that, even when examples did not

exist in the corpus, most of the lexemes collected tended to be either verb forms, or related to them.

## 5.2. Classification of lexemes on a syntactic-semantic basis

It turned out to be fairly easy to separate the verbs, and lexemes derived from them, into two distinct groups:

- verbs which describe effects of light, e.g. *gleam*, *glitter*, *refulgir* and *cintilar*;
- verbs which describe changes in light, e.g. *brighten*, *darken*, *clarear* and *escurecer*.

Those lexemes which could not be classified within these two groups normally fell into one of the following categories:

- adjectives or nouns related to a state of light or darkness;
- lexemes used to describe light which belonged primarily to other lexical fields, e.g. *flow*, and *brincar*;
- times of the day or night, s.g. *dawn* and *alvorada*;
- (in English) compounds formed from *light*, e.g. *lamplit* and *starlight*<sup>12</sup>.

This paper will concentrate only on the first set of verbs mentioned.

## 5.3. Classification of lexemes using componential analysis

The lexical components considered in the analysis of the examples will be found in Appendix A. The choice of components was based partly on information from reference books<sup>13</sup> and partly

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<sup>12</sup> In Portuguese, these expressions were translated by phrases such as *iluminado por candeeiros* and *luz das estrelas*.

<sup>13</sup> a) *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1973.

b) *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*, London and Glasgow, Collins, 1987.



on the use both author and translator made of the lexemes in context, modified, naturally, by my own knowledge as a native speaker of English with a reasonable grasp of Portuguese. The denotative and connotative components have been kept separate.

Each lexeme was also graded on a scale in which 3 could be associated with strong light, 2 with, medium light, and 1 with positive expressions of weak light. Appendix B shows the verbs grouped according to intensity.

## 6. Lexical analysis of the verbs describing effects of light

### 6.1. Denotative aspects

Insofar as it is possible to separate denotative from connotative aspects, those examples which could be considered more «literal», or related to the physical world, will be discussed in this section, and the connotative uses will be dealt with later. As you may notice, certain verbs have been include which are, arguably, outside the immediate field under discussion. Examples of these are *burn*, *arder*, and *queimar* among the first set of verbs<sup>14</sup>. Since it is the nature of *light* to be associated with *heat*, it would be difficult to separate the two. However, here *heat* will be be treated simply as an optional lexical component of light.

*Brilhar* and *cintilar* have been included in both groups 3 and 2 as they seem to be used for such a wide range of situations, for reasons which will, I hope, become clear.

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c) FIGUEIREDO, Cândido de — *Grande Dicionário da Língua Portuguesa*, Lisboa, Livraria Bertrand, 15.<sup>a</sup> edição, 1939.

d) *The New Michaelis Illustrated Dictionary*, 10.<sup>a</sup> ed., Vol. I, English — Portuguese, Wiesbaden, F. A. Brockhaus, 1971.

e) TAYLOR, James L. — *A Portuguese — English Dictionary*, London, Harrap, 1958.

f) MORAIS, Armando de — *Dicionário de Inglês/Português*, Porto, Porto Editora, 1980.

<sup>14</sup> SNELL-HORNBY, Mary — Analysing this type of verb, preferred to consider *light* and *heat* together, since the two fields seem to merge at a certain point.

### 6.1.1. A statistical analysis

Before we consider the statistical analysis, there is one point that should be made. When collecting the corpus, the emphasis was on finding as much variety as possible, and therefore not all the examples similar to the ones already listed were recorded. One can safely say, then, that the corpus is biased towards *variety* rather than *uniformity*. When, however, some rough statistics on the number of times certain lexemes occurred were made, the results were interesting.

Of the 155 examples in English, the most popular were:

- *shine* — 19 %
- *gleam* — 15 %
- *glint* — 9 %
- *glimmer* — 7 %

There were only one example each of *glare* and *scintillate* and the remaining 50 % of the examples were fairly evenly distributed among the other 15 verbs.

In Portuguese, about 110 of the 155 examples, 71 %, were translated directly by lexemes related to the 18 verbs given here. The most popular lexemes in these 110 were:

- *brilhar* — 50 %
- *cintilar* — 25 %

which left only 25 % of the examples to be distributed among the remaining 16 verbs.

Let us now examine how the most popular lexemes correspond to each other. *Shine* and *gleam*, apart from being favourite words of Tolkien's, have a wide range of meaning, and together they account for nearly half of the examples with *brilhar* but only 4 examples of *cintilar*. However, that still leaves about half of the examples with *brilhar* and the large majority of those translated by *cintilar* to be accounted for in terms of the other verbs, nearly 50 % of the examples.

It is too easy to simply criticise the translator for lack of imagination, although no doubt this is a contributing factor. One must ask instead why it is that *brilhar* and *cintilar* are such «safe» neutral words that they can be used so widely.

### 6.1.2. Analysis using lexical components

If one looks up any of these lexemes in a bilingual dictionary, or even in the miniature bilingual lexicon which was devised using the terms in the book and the translation alone, for each of these words there is a tendency to list several «possible» equivalents. Appendix A may seem to give more explicit information than the average dictionary. However, lexical components on their own cannot solve the problem and the apparent basic meaning value of each lexeme is further modified by factors which decide their suitability to the collocation and the style of text. Much may depend on the personal taste of the writer or translator, but his or her choice will also reflect social conventions of vocabulary usage<sup>15</sup>. The information in Appendix A is heavily dependent on the texts under examination, but a study of several authors and translators in both languages, may make it possible to extend the list of lexical components to include items such as +/— literary, +/— modern usage, or others.

### 6.1.3. Degree of equivalence of meaning in Appendix A

According to Appendix A, there seems to be some degree of equivalence as follows:

— blaze, flame	<i>crepitar, flamejar</i>
— burn	<i>crepitar, arder and queimar</i>
— dazzle	<i>crepitar, ofuscar</i>
— gleam, shine,	<i>brilhar</i>
— glitter	<i>brilhar, coruscar</i>
— glow, radiate	<i>irradiar, radiar</i>
— scintillate	<i>cintilar</i>
— shimmer	<i>bruxulear</i>
— stream	<i>jorrar</i>
— twinkle	<i>tremeluzir.</i>

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<sup>15</sup> The way different translations can be produced is explored in HARTMANN, R. K. K. — *Contrastive Textology*, Heidelberg, Julius Groos Verlag, 1980.

This leaves the English verbs *beam*, *flare*, *flash*, *flicker*, *glare*, *glimmer*, *glint*, and *glisten*, and the Portuguese verbs *incandescer*, *luzir*, *refulgir*, *reluzir* and *rutilar* without near equivalents in the other language.

### 6.1.3.1. The acceptability of apparent equivalence

On closer examination, it was found that the componential analysis had not revealed certain incompatibilities, some of which could only be explained by considering the wider context in which the lexemes were found. To demonstrate this, let us examine examples 1 and 2 where *blaze* is translated by *crepitar* and *cintilar* respectively<sup>16</sup>:

1. «In the middle there was a wood fire *blazing*» (91).  
«No meio *crepitava* um lume de lenha» (101).
2. «The boards *blazed* with candles, white and yellow» (143).  
«A mesa *cintilava*, iluminada por inúmeras velas brancas e amarelas» (153).

In both cases we have intensity 3 light, naked flames — from an open fire and candles, and both situations are to be found in wider contexts of warmth and welcoming surroundings. The only difference seems to be that *crepitar* seems to be related to sound — the crackling noise made by burning wood — that makes it unsuitable for use with candles. It appears that *crepitar* is a *sound* rather than *light* lexeme. In example 2 the translator uses *cintilar* and builds it up by adding «iluminada» and describing the «inúmeras velas» when the number of the candles is not referred to in the original text.

*Blaze* and *crepitar* are therefore not equivalents, but the translator's intuition leads her to use *crepitar* perhaps because the wider context of warmth and welcoming surroundings, suggested above, is better conjured up by the idea of sound than light. The native speaker of English may well feel that a sound element exists in example 1, but whether it is part of the meaning of *blaze* or *fire*, or the whole

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<sup>16</sup> The numbers given after each quotation are the page nos. of Tolkien's book or the translation — as appropriate.

context, is a difficult question to answer. Example 2 suggests that the translator is aware that *cinilar* is too «weak» a lexeme to convey the force of *blaze* in this context.

There are other examples of a certain incompatibility not found in the componential analysis. *Cinilar* is a popular word, at least with the translator, and yet the search of Tolkien's work produced only one example of *scintillate*, and it would be true to say that it is a rarely used word in English. *Tremeluzir* may seem similar to *twinkle* denotatively, but was never used to translate it. *Glitter* and *coruscar* seem to coincide denotatively, but all the examples we have of *coruscar* are connotative and none of them translate *glitter*.

If we eliminate the verbs which turn out to be different on further examination, we are left with 16 out of the total of 39 verbs showing degrees of equivalence, rather less than half. Let us now consider the other 23 verbs to see what makes them different.

#### 6.1.4. Differences in meaning

If we consider Appendix B, it would seem only natural that the translator would find most difficulty being imaginative over those lexemes which express a medium or weak intensity of light. However, let us first examine how the stronger light effects are translated.

##### 6.1.4.1. Verbs referring to strong light

*Flare* and *flash* seem to differ from *blaze*, *flame* and *flamejar* on one point, heat is only «possible» and not a normal component. *Incandescer*, in its adjective or noun form, seems to capture the idea of heat, although the sense of movement would appear to be different. Apparently identical lexemes, *incandescent* and *incandescence* exist in English but no examples were found in the text. *Jorrar* was included in the list as it was used to translate *flash* in example 6, and its use would seem to be similar to that of *stream*, although both these lexemes probably appear more frequently in collocation with *liquid* than *light*.

In order to see how the translator tries to interpret certain uses of these verbs, let us examine some examples:

3. «He caught... a glimpse of Strider leaping out of the darkness with a *flaming* brand of wood in either hand» (208).  
«Viu... Passo de Gigante saltar da escuridão com um pedaço de lenha *incandescente* em cada mão» (220).
4. «From out of the shadow a red sword leaped *flaming*» (345).  
(Context: a magic sword — i.e. made of fire).  
«Da sombra irrompeu, *flamejante*, uma espada vermelha» (357).
5. «He saw... a *shining* figure of white light; and behind it ran small shadowy forms waving *flames*, that *flared* red in the grey mist» (227).  
«Pareceu-lhe ver... uma  *cintilante* figura de luz branca, atrás do qual corriam pequenos vultos difusos a agitar *chamas* que *brilhavam*, vermelhas na névoa cinzenta» (239).
6. «The figure lifted his arms and a light *flashed* from the staff he wielded» (138).  
«O vulto ergueu as mãos e *jorrou* uma luz do bastão que empunhava» (148).
7. «(a light in the eastern sky) *flashed* and faded many times... like *lightning*... he could still see the white *flashes*» (195).  
«no céu oriental, uma luz que *brilhou* e apagou muitas vezes... *relâmpagos*... continuou a ver os *clarões*» (206).

The translator chose to translate *flaming* differently in 3 and 4, perhaps because she felt the movement of the flame in the former was minimal, whereas strong movement, with *flamejante*, seemed more suitable in 4. *A flame* and *a blaze* are usually translated by *chama* (ex. 5), and a *flash* by *clarão* (ex. 7), although occasionally by *relâmpago*; unlike *relâmpago*, *lightning* is restricted to its atmospheric collocation. However, *Clarão* is also used to translate *glow* in the following example:

8. «As Strider was speaking they watched his strange eager face, dimly lit in the red *glow* of the wood-fire» (206).  
«Enquanto Passo de Gigante falava, os outros observavam-lhe o rosto estranho e ansioso vagamente iluminado pelo *clarão* vermelho da fogueira» (218).

From this context we can either deduce that *clarão* has a wide range of meaning or that the above example is a bad translation.

*Flared* is weakly translated in ex. 5 by *brilhar* — the distance involved in the context would have been a reason for using *flare* (no heat) rather than *blaze* and, since *flares* are used to signal for help, something much needed by the hero at this moment, this connotation is also present.

#### 6.1.4.2. Verbs referring to weaker effects of light

When dealing with the weaker effects of light, the translator sometimes tries to render the finer nuances of meaning with verbs that would seem to roughly equivalent, as in the following examples:

9. «White *flames* seemed to Frodo to *flicker* on their crests...» (227).  
«Teve a impressão de que *tremeluziam* chamas brancas na crista das ondas...» (239).
10. «And the light of the stars was in her hair,  
And in her raiment *glimmering*» (204).  
(Context — a poem).  
«E o brilho das estrelas *luzia-lhe* no cabelo  
E *bruxuleava-lhe* nos vestidos» (215).
11. «Her mantle *glinted in the moon*» (204). (Context — as 10).  
«O manto dela *refulgia* ao luar» (215).

Apart from these examples, though, these verbs are always translated either by *brilhar* or *cintilar*. Since 36 examples with these verbs were collected, about 23 % of our total for all the English verbs, this is significant.

#### 6.1.5. Problems involved in translating the English verbs expressing weak to medium intensity of light

In the examples in the previous section *brilhar* and *cintilar* were used in Exs. 2, 5 and 7 to translate *blaze*, *shine*, *flare* and *flash*, all verbs of light intensity 3. It is for this reason that the two Portuguese verbs are classified under intensity 3 as well as 2. Let

us now examine the English verbs in groups 1 and 2 and their translation by *brilhar* and  *cintilar* in order to discover why these are such popular verbs.

#### 6.1.5.1. FLICKER

*Flicker* is a verb that describes both the sources of light and reflected light. The intensity is weak and it is characterised by an unsteady, intermittent movement between light and darkness:

12. «Desperate, he drew his own sword, and it seemed to him that it *flickered* red, as if it were a firebrand» (208).  
«Desesperado, Frodo empunhou a própria espada e pareceu-lhe que ela tinha um *brilho* vermelho, se estivesse em brasa» (219-20).

#### 6.1.5.2. GLEAM

*Gleam* is complex in that it can refer to both the source of light or reflected light:

13. «Then the sun *gleamed* out of ragged clouds again» (99).  
«Depois o sol voltou a *brilhar*, através das nuvens esfarapadas» (109).
14. «The air was *gleaming* and sunlit, but hazy» (124).  
«Havia sol, mas o ar estava enevoadado» (134).

It can also refer to both hard and soft surfaces:

15. «In the dark without moon or stars a drawn blade *gleamed*, as if a chill light had been unsheathed» (188).  
«Na escuridão sem estrelas nem luar *cintilou* uma lâmina desembainhada, como se tivesse sido descoberta uma luz gelada» (199).
16. «... his hair was long and *gleaming*...» (208).  
«... tinha cabelo comprido e *luminoso*...» (220).



### 6.1.5.3. GLIMMER

*Glimmer* is a weak, uncertain light, so weak that it is difficult to classify it either as a source of light or as reflecting it, though both interpretations are possible. It tends to refer to the slight luminosity which makes it possible to see pale-coloured things or metal in semi-darkness. We feel that this is one occasion when the translator has simply misunderstood the meaning of the word instead of merely having problems with how to render it:

17. «They passed slowly, and the hobbits could see the starlight *glimmering* on their hair and in their eyes» (89). (Context — a moonless night).  
«Passaram devagar e os hobbits viram a luz das estrelas a *cintilar*-lhes no cabelo e nos olhos» (98).
18. «The white bollards near the water's edge *glimmered* in the light of two lamps on high post» (108). (Context — a misty night).  
«Os postes de amarração brancos, perto da beira-d'água, *brilhavam* à luz de dois candeeiros colocados em postes altos» (118).

### 6.1.5.4. GLINT

*Glint* seems to refer to reflected light, and there is an element of short, sharp movement of light off the surface reflecting it:

19. «The river... was... *glinting* here and there in the light of the stars...» (133).  
«O rio... *cintilando* aqui e ali à luz das estrelas...» (143).
20. «His hair *glinted* like gold in the morning sun» (361).  
(... o cabelo a *brilhar* como ouro ao sol de manhã...» (361).

### 6.1.5.5. GLISTEN

*Glisten* is different from the other lexemes in that it usually implies reflection off a wet surface. Tolkien also seems to associate it with the moon:

21. «The leaves of trees were *glistening*, and every twig was dripping; the grass was grey with cold dew» (120).  
«As folhas das árvores *cintilavam* e todos os raminhos pingavam; a erva estava cinzenta, coberta de orvalho frio» (130).
22. «The moon... *glistened* in his white hair as the wind stirred it» (138).  
«A Lua... pareceu *brilhar-lhe* no cabelo branco agitado pelo vento» (148).

#### 6.1.5.6. GLOW

*Glow* is usually, but not always, found in collocation with an idea of warmth, whether real or metaphorical, and an almost imperceptible, pulsing movement:

23. «... both the knife and the hand that held it *glowed* with a pale light» (208).  
«... tanto a faca como a mão que a segurava *irradiavam* uma luz pálida» (20).
24. «A *gleam* of firelight came from the open doors, and soft lights were *glowing* in the many windows» (293).  
«Das portas abertas saía um *reflexo* do lume e nas muitas janelas *brilhavam* luzes suaves» (304).

#### 6.1.5.7. SHIMMER

*Shimmer* is a soft light characterised by a feeling of slightly undulating movement. From the collocations in which it appears, we can deduce a certain expression of sensuousness in its use:

25. «The silver corselet *shimmered* before his eyes like the light upon a rippling sea» (350).  
«A cota de prata *brilhava* diante dos seus olhos como luz num mar ondulado» (362).

#### 6.1.5.8. SHINE

*Shine* is a verb with a wide range of uses and is found in collocation with «sun» and «stars». It is often translated by *brilhar* but also by other verbs as we shall see in sections 6.1.6. and 6.2. There is an example of its interpretation as *cintilar* in ex. 5.

#### 6.1.5.9. TWINKLE

*Twinkle* is largely associated with the type of light produced by the stars in the sky or of lights surrounded by darkness in the distance — that is, tiny points of light which shine unsteadily, usually for atmospheric reasons:

26. «Darkness came down quickly, as they plodded slowly downhill and up again, until at last they saw lights *twinkling* some distance ahead» (160).  
«A escuridão chegou depressa, enquanto avançavam lentamente, ora a descer, ora a subir, até verem finalmente luzes a *brilhar* a alguma distância» (170).
27. «The sky above had cleared again and was slowly filling with *twinkling* stars» (203).  
«O céu clareava de novo e ia-se enchendo, devagar, de estrelas *cintilantes*» (215).

#### 6.1.5.10. BRILHAR and CINTILAR as translation «solutions»

When analysing these examples, we must presume that the translator was simply unable to find a wider variety of lexemes, and attempt to come to some conclusions on the nature of *brilhar* and *cintilar*. It seems that the translator prefers *brilhar* when she senses little or no movement in the light, as in exs. 13, 18 and 24 and when the surface giving off or reflecting the light is soft, as in 20, 22 and 24. It is interesting that whereas *gleam*, *glint* and *glisten* in ex. 20 and 22 refer, at least partly, to the golden or slightly metallic highlights in hair, the translator prefers the softer *brilhar*. Ex. 25, in which a silver corselet is referred to, may seem to contradict this, but as the larger context gives one to understand that, in spite

of being made of metal, it is amazingly soft, this is not surprising. The only real exception to this rule seems to be ex. 12 where *brilhar* is used with a sword. However, this may be explained by the fact that *brilho* = *flicker* is then compared to a *brasa* = *ember*.

*Cintilar* seems to be preferred when there is a sense of movement, as in all the examples here, or reflection off water, as in exs. 19 and 21.

Before drawing any further conclusions from this section, let us now turn to the Portuguese verbs which may seem hard to match with the English ones.

#### 6.1.6. The possibilities of LUZIR, REFULGIR, RELUZIR and RUTILAR

From the few examples that appear in the translation, it seems possible to deduce that these verbs describe reflected light. The examples in the following paragraphs must be considered a representative sample of these verbs — only a further ten were collected, and four of these were adjectives translating *bright*. Why does the translator use them so sparingly? One could suggest that several of these examples have a more poetical flavour than usual. There is also the point that in half the examples two verbs of light appear and variety becomes obligatory.

##### 6.1.6.1. LUZIR

*Luzir* seems to be a verb of lower light intensity, 2, and a minimal sense of movement. It is used to translate *shimmer*, *shine* and *twinkle* and favours collocations of beauty in Nature and a certain softness:

28. «The trembling starlight of the skies  
He saw there mirrored *shimmering*» (205).  
(Context — poem)

«Neles viu, espelhada, a *luzir*,

A trémula luz das estrelas do céu» (217).

29. «Their dark leaves *shone* and their berries *glowed* red  
in the light of the rising sun» (295). (Ref. to holly-trees).  
«As folhas escuras *luziam* e as bagas vermelhas *brilhavam*  
à luz do Sol nascente» (307). (Ref. to azevinhos).

30. «... the dew upon the yellow leaves was *glimmering*, and woven nets of gossamer *twinkled* on every bus» (252).  
«O orvalho *brilhava* nas folhas amarelas e em todos os arbustos *luziam* finíssimas teias de aranha» (262).

#### 6.1.6.2. RELUZIR

*Reluzir* appears in similar collocations to that of *luzir*, but the light is more intense and a connotation of movement is more apparent, which may explain why it, too, translates *shimmer* and *shine* but, unlike *luzir*, which favours *twinkle*, also translates *glitter*:

31. «... (a beautiful golden ring) *shone* and *glittered* in the sun...» (62).  
«... um belo anel de ouro, que *brilhava* e *reluzia* ao sol...» (71).
32. «Her hair was flying loose, and as it caught the sun it *shone* and *shimmered*» (146).  
«O cabelo esvoaçava-lhe, solto, e *brilhava* e *reluzia*, quando captava o sol» (156).
33. «The golden buttons *shone* on his embroidered silk waistcoat» (37).  
«Os botões dourados do seu colete de seda bordado *reluziram*» (45).

#### 6.1.6.3. REFULGIR

*Refulgir* suggests slightly less intensity than the other verbs which may be why it is used to translate *flicker*, *glint* and *glitter*, but only in collocation with precious stones, which in turn are compared to «stars»:

34. «In the dusk, (the horse's) headstall *flickered* and *flashed*, as if it were studded with gems like living stars» (221).  
«A testeira do animal *cintilava* na luz crepuscular, como se estivesse cravejado de pedras *refulgentes* como estrelas».

35. «... the gems on (the corselet) *glittered* like stars...» (350).  
«... as pedras preciosas *refulgiram* como estrelas...» (362).

In ex. 11, where *refulgir* translates *glint*, both verbs would seem to suggest a «mantle» decorated with precious stones or metals.

#### 6.1.6.4. RUTILAR

*Rutilar* appears only in its adjective form and seems to be restricted to the collocation of reflection off metal. This may not be immediately apparent in ex. 37, but the translator must have used it to convey the magical context in which the waves turn into «shining riders», or «knights» = «cavaleiros» dressed in armour:

36. «Bilbo... fastened Sting upon the *glittering* belt» (291).  
«Bilbo... ajustou-lhe o Ferrão no *rutilante* cinto» (302).  
37. «... some of the waves took the form of great white horse with *shining* white riders» (236).  
«... algumas das ondas assumiram a forma de grandes cavalos brancos montados por *rutilantes* cavaleiros» (246).

#### 6.2. Connotative Aspects

It is the connotative aspects of these verbs that interest Mary Snell-Hornby because they frequently refer to facial expression, particularly as reflected in the eyes. Tolkien uses no fewer than nine verbs in this way, but the translator uses only three, and relies on the context to do the rest.

In the following examples the translation refers directly to the facial expression implicit in the English verb:

38. «The light of the lanterns fell on his *beaming* face» (37).  
«A luz da lanterna reflectiu-se no seu rosto *sorridente*» (45).  
39. ««Wake up indeed!» he said, cocking an eye at Elrond. There was a bright *twinkle* in it and no sign of sleepiness in it that Frodo could see» (243).

««Acorde hem?» observou, a olhar para Elrond, e Frodo reparou que os seus olhos *brilhavam maliciosamente* e não apresentavam quaisquer vestígios de sonolência».

40. «He (eyed) Sam closely, but with a smile *flickering* on his face» (73).  
«(Observou) Sam atentamente, mas com um sorriso a *brincar* no rosto» (82).

In ex. 41 it is interesting to notice that *angry* qualifies *light*, but *coléricos* refers to *olhos*:

41. «Bilbo flushed, and there was an *angry light* in his eyes» (42).  
«Bilbo corou e os olhos *brilharam-lhe, coléricos*» (50).

The emotion behind the expression is sometimes explicitly present in the context:

42. «The wizard's face remained grave and attentive, and only a *flicker* in his deep eyes showed that he was startled and indeed alarmed» (42).  
«O rosto do feiticeiro manteve-se grave e atento e só uma pequena *cintilação* dos seus olhos profundos denunciou que estava assustado, alarmado, até» (50).
43. «The horror faded out of their hearts as they looked at him, and saw the merry *glint* in his eyes» (155).  
«O horror dissipou-lhes do coração quando o olharam e viram a *cintilação* alegre dos seus olhos» (165).

At other times it is conveyed by the immediate context:

44. «Gandaf's eyes *flashed*. «It will be my turn to be angry soon», he said» (42).  
«Os olhos de Gandalf *cintilaram*. «Não tarda a minha vez de me zangar», ameaçou» (50).

When the translator wishes to convey real anger she uses *coruscar*:

45. ««Don't be a fool! What have you heard, and why did you listen?» Gandalf's eyes *flashed* and his brows stuck out like bristles» (73).

- ««Não sejas parvo! Que foi que ouviste e por que te puseste à escuta?» Os olhos de Gandalf *coruscavam* e as suas sobrancelhas estavam espetadas como cerdas» (81).
46. «He was angry, and Pippin could see his eye *glinting*» (327).  
«Irritou-se e o hobbit viu-lhe os olhos *coruscar...*» (339).

There are other examples which seem to be translated by *brilhar* or *cintilar*. The wider context can usually tell us what is expressed.

*Shine* tends to convey pleasure or enthusiasm:

47. «As Strider was speaking they watched his strange eager face, dimly lit in the red glow of the wood-fire. His eyes *shone...*» (206).  
Enquanto Passo de Gigante falava, os outros observavam-lhe o rosto estranho e ansioso, vagamente iluminado pelo clarão vermelho da fogueira. *Brilhavam-lhe* os olhos...» (218).

*Gleam* is similar but also shows special interest in the situation:

48. «Gandalf looked again very hard at Bilbo, and there was a *gleam* in his eyes» (41).  
«Gandalf fitou-o de novo com muita atenção e com um *brilho especial* nos olhos» (50).

*Glint* also shows this special interest:

49. «Gandalf looked at Frodo, and his eyes *glinted*» (65).  
«Gandalf olhou para Frodo e os seus olhos *cintilaram*» (74).
50. «... the was *glint* in his eyes when he heard of the Riders» (144).  
«... os seus olhos *brilharam* quando ouviu falar dos Cavaleiros» (154).

*Glitter*, used with eyes, has connotations of evil. The only example would need a long explanation of the context but it is translated by *cintilar*.

With so few examples, one can only speculate whether the Portuguese verbs always have the same elements of meaning in certain collocations.



*Coruscar* would definitely seem to be connected with anger as it appears only in this type of collocation, regardless of the fact that different verbs are concerned in each case — *flash* and *glint*, and on another occasion *glare*. In examples 45 and 46, the reason why Tolkien uses different verbs in each case is related not to the emotion, but to the physical context — in the first case, broad daylight, in the second, underground with only one point of light to illuminate the scene.

*Cintilar* seems to translate *flash*, *flicker* and *glint*, verbs with a certain movement, and *brilhar* those without, *gleam* and *shine*. This would corroborate the findings on these verbs in their denotative uses. Yet *brilhar* is used in ex. 50. Does it, perhaps, contain the connotation of «interest» better than *cintilar*?

On two occasions the translator chose to render *twinkle* as *piscar* as in the following example:

51. «... they saw the *twinkling* lights of a house» (133).  
«... viram o *piscar* das luzes duma casa» (143).

*Piscar* would normally translate *wink* in English and it would seem to interpret the friendliness usually associated with *twinkle* quite nicely in this example.

## 7. Conclusions

### 7.1. At the level of the lexemes, collocations and contexts found in these texts

This paper began by talking about «untranslatability» and the area of *light* provides several examples of this problem. English and Portuguese apparently share basic ideas of effects of light, both emitted and reflected, and, there are similar connections between the fields of *light*, and those of *heat*, *sound* and *liquid*. However, the ways in which these basic meaning components combine with additional features such as intensity of light, movement, and reflecting surfaces vary quite considerably. Also, although both languages use some of these verbs to denote facial expression of emotions, it is not easy to establish direct equivalence between individual items of the two lexicons.

Mary Snell-Hornby's suggestion that «the descriptive verb may be broadly defined as a verb that consists of an act-nucleus and a modificant whereby the presence of further semantic components is not excluded»<sup>17</sup> would seem to be supported by this paper. Certain verbs would seem to be more «neutral», that is, they can be used in a wider variety of situations. *Brilhar* and *cintilar* are our main examples of this, but *shine* and *gleam* are also used frequently. The more limited the use of the verbs, the more conditioning factors, or modificants, seem to be involved.

These conditioning factors seem to exist at the level of the lexeme in certain cases, for example, *glisten* and its implication of a wet surface. At other times, it is the collocation that modifies, or is modified by the lexemes, as we saw with exs. 1 and 2 with *blaze*, and with the examples in which the verbs described facial expression. On certain occasions it is the wider context which supplies the clue, as in ex. 5, when the implications of *flare* are considered. It is true that one could explain the connection of *flare* = *signal for help* at the level of componential analysis but, since one can only call this component «optional», and it is the context, and not the collocation, or actual lexemes with which it is found, that gives full value to the use of the word, this case would seem to justify the claim that the lexeme is directly affected by the context.

The greater or lesser popularity of certain words can only be explained by reference to factors of context in the widest possible sense. If the almost total absence of the use of words like *scintillate* and *incandescence* in English, or the translator's reluctance to be more adventurous with the use of *luzir*, *reluzir* or *refulgir* are to be explained, explanations must be found outside the text.

## 7.2. The effect of historical and environmental factors on semantic fields

It must be obvious by now that the English verbs discussed here, except for the rarely used *radiate* and *scintillate*, are of Germanic origin. This does not mean that they in fact coincide exactly with modern German verbs — a look at Mary Snell-Hornby's analysis

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<sup>17</sup> SNELL-HORNBY, Mary — *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

will demonstrate this. In order to explain exactly why English prefers these lexemes to the Latin based ones, that can be found in the dictionary, it would be necessary to study the subject from a diachronic point of view, studying texts from several periods. In this way one could possibly establish at what stage, or stages, preference for the verbs of Germanic origin developed. It would be interesting to see whether it was the result of the conscious reaction against French or Latin based vocabulary as English re-established itself as a national language in all areas during the Renaissance, or whether it was thanks to the Romantic movement with its emphasis on a «return to the origins of language».

Although these factors no doubt contributed to the development of this vocabulary, perhaps the phenomenon is better explained by what is normally referred to as the Sapir-Whorf theory. This theory is used to explain why the Bedouins have so many terms for «sand», and the Eskimos for «snow» — the natural environment requires greater specificity in these areas than in parts of the world where sand and snow are scarce or unimportant in an everyday context.

The fact that English is richer than Portuguese in terms describing weaker effects of light, but poorer in terms for stronger light, would suggest that the darker landscape of Britain as a Northern European country requires different concepts to those used in sunny Portugal and the Mediterranean. The historical and social factors referred to above may, therefore, have some relevance, but it is likely that the major reason why English kept its German based words was simply because they expressed the reality of the natural environment better.

By choosing the text by Tolkien, the chances that such a conclusion could be reached were fairly high. It would, however, be interesting to see how English translators interpret Portuguese writers describing Portugal, or how both languages describe landscapes foreign to their basic experience of life. Has Brazilian Portuguese developed a larger or different vocabulary to cope with the realities of light in an equatorial context? Do Portuguese writers find it frustrating trying to «paint pictures in words» of Northern European landscapes? What results could be expected of an analysis of one of Conrad's African novels and the respective Portuguese translation? Only further research can help answer these questions.

**7.3. The effect of social and personal factors  
on creative language**

The reason why the translator avoids frequent use of the verbs like *luzir* and *refulgir* is also complex. It has already been pointed out that the examples tended to appear in more traditionally «literary» collocations; some appeared in poems, others in evocative descriptions of nature. Is this sufficient explanation, or is it more a question of personal taste, in this case that of the translator? Further research might well reveal not only personal differences of taste, but also, with a diachronic selection of texts, a tendency for choice of vocabulary to be subject not only to natural evolution but also to fashions in linguistic and, hence, literary style.

*Belinda Maia*

*Appendix A*

*Lexical components*

*Key*

A = Lexeme. 1 = verb 2 = adjective 3 = noun  
 ( ) = example not present in texts

B = Intensity of light: graded 1 — 3

C = Denotative elements:

- a = source of light
- b = reflected light
- c = heat implicit
- d = heat possible
- e = movement (i) constant
- f = movement (ii) intermittent — activity 1-3
- g = reflected off hard surface
- h = reflected off soft surface
- i = reflected off wet surface

D = Connotative elements

- a = facial expression
- b = expression with eyes
- c = pleasure expressed
- d = anger expressed
- e = malice expressed
- f = knowledge expressed
- g = amusement expressed

*English*

A	B	C										D						
		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	
beam (1) 23	2	+	—	—	—	+	—	—	—	—	—	+	—	+	—	—	—	+
blaze 123	3	+	—	+	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
burn 1 (2) 3	3	+	—	+	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	+	—	—	—	—	—	—
dazzle 12 (3)	3	+	—	—	—	+	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
flame 123	3	+	—	+	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	+	—	+	—	—	—
flare 1 (2) (3)	3	+	—	—	+	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
flash 1 (2) 3	3	+	—	—	+	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	+	—	+	—	—	—

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flicker 1 (2) 3	1	+ + - - -	2	- - - -	+ - - - -
glare 1 (2) (3)	3	+ - - + +	- - - -	- + - + -	- - - -
gleam 123	2	+ + - - +	- - - -	- + + - -	- - - -
glimmer 123	1	+ + - - -	1	- - - -	(+) - - - -
glint 1 (2) 3	2	- + - - -	2	+ - - -	- + - - + + -
glisten 12 (3)	2	- + - - +	- - - +	- (+) - - -	- - - -
glitter 12 (3)	3	- + - - -	2	+ - - -	- + - - + + -
glow 123	2	+ - - + -	1	- - - -	- - - - -
radiate (1) (2) 3	2	+ - - + -	1	- - - -	(+) - (+) - - - -
scintillate (1) 2 (3)	3	+ + - - -	2	- - - -	- - - - -
shimmer 1 (2) 3	1	- + - - -	1	- + - -	- - - - -
shine 12 (3)	2	+ + - - +	- - - -	- + + - -	- - - -
stream 1 (2) (3)	2	+ - - - -	2	- - - -	- - - - -
twinkle 123	1	+ - - - -	1	- - - -	- + - - + - +

*Portuguese*

arder 1 (2) (3)	3	+ - + - -	- - - -	- - - - -	
brilhar 123	2/3	+ + - - -	+ - - -	- + + - - - -	
bruxulear 1 (2) (3)	1	- + - - -	1	- + - - - - -	
cintilar 123	2/3	+ + - - -	2	- - - -	- + + + - + +
coruscar 1 (2) (3)	3	- + - - -	2	+ - - -	- + - + - - -
crepitar 1 (2) (3)	3	+ - + - -	3	- - - -	- - - - -
flamejar (1) 2 (3)	3	+ - + - -	3	- - - -	- - - - -
incandescer (1) 23	3	+ - + - -	1	- - - -	- - - - -
irradiar 1 (2) (3)	2	+ - - + -	1	- - - -	- - - - -
jorrar 12	2	+ - - - -	2	- - - -	- - - - -
luzir 123	2	- + - - -	1	- - - -	- - - - -
ofuscar 12 (3)	3	+ - - - +	- - - -	- - - - -	
queimar (1) (2) 3	3	+ - + - -	- - - -	- - - - -	
radiar (1) 23	3	+ - - + -	1	- - - -	(+) - (+) - - - -
refulgir 1 (2) (3)	2	- + - - -	2	- - - -	- - - - -
reluzir 1 (2) (3)	3	- + - - -	2	- - - -	- - - - -
rutilar (1) 2 (3)	3	- + - - -	2	- - - -	- - - - -
tremeluzir 1 (2) (3)	1	+ - - - -	1	- - - -	- - - - -

*Appendix B*

*Verbs describing action of light, grouped according to intensity*

- 3 English: blaze, burn, dazzle, flame, flare, flare, flash, glare, glitter, scintillate=10
- 3 Portuguese: arder, brilhar, cintilar, coruscar, crepitar, (flamejar) (incandescer), ofuscar, (queimar), (radiar), reluzir, (rutilar)=12
- 2 English: (beam), gleam, glint, glisten, glow, (radiate), shine=7
- 2 Portuguese: brilhar, cintilar, irradiar, jorrar, luzir=5
- 1 English: flicker, glimmer, shimmer, twinkle=4
- 1 Portuguese: bruxulear, tremeluzir=2