

# 11.

## Personal Names in the Irish Gaelic Translation of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*

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### 1. Introduction

This article discusses the most common personal names in the Irish Gaelic<sup>1</sup> translation of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, which appeared in 2012, on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the first publication of Tolkien's classic work. The translator, Nicholas Williams is a linguist. He is an Englishman who has published widely on the Irish and Cornish languages, and, apart from *The Hobbit*, he also translated *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* into Irish Gaelic. As Irish is a minority language in Ireland and has more non-native speakers than native ones, it is not unusual for a non-native speaker to translate into Irish. Williams translated *The Hobbit* not only into Irish, but also into Cornish. With the appearance of the Scottish Gaelic translation of this book on the occasion of the Tolkien Reading Day on 25 March 2025, *The Hobbit* is now available in five of the six Celtic languages: Welsh, Cornish, Breton, Irish Gaelic and Scottish Gaelic. The only one missing yet is the Manx version. All these translations were published by Everttype, a publishing company run by the American-Irish linguist Michael Everson, which specialises in publishing books in various minority languages – especially the works of J. R. R. Tolkien and Lewis Carroll (Ó Coimín 2025).

The Preface to *An Hobad* states that the Irish translation is based on the third edition of *The Hobbit*, which appeared in 1966, but the corrections in *The Annotated Hobbit* (ed. Douglas A. Anderson 2002) were also taken into consideration (Tolkien 2012, v). In the original foreword written by Tolkien, which explains how English is used to represent the languages of long ago that feature in *The Hobbit*, some things were changed in order to provide an Irish-language context. So, for example, instead of “English is used to represent the languages” (Tolkien 1998, 9), in *An Hobad* one can find “Irish is used to represent the languages” (Tolkien 2012, x). It is also stated that

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<sup>1</sup> The Celtic language spoken in Ireland is known as ‘Irish’ or ‘Gaelic’ on the island of Ireland, but is mostly referred to as ‘Irish Gaelic’ in the rest of the world, so as to distinguish it from its close relative, Scottish Gaelic, which is spoken in Scotland. In this article, both ‘Irish’ and ‘Irish Gaelic’ are used.

“[n]ames like *Elrond* and *Gondolin* which are in the Elvish language Sindarin are not translated” (ibid.). Note that this is the only section of the book that appears both in Irish and in English.

The translation was reviewed by several people after it appeared, and it was generally well received, although some reviewers had mixed opinions as to the quality of the Irish text and the Gaelicisations (e.g., *An Sionnach Fionn* 2012; Ó Coileáin 2012; Sims 2013; or *Cork Irish* 2014). The present author is not aware of any publication that has discussed the personal names in this translation.

In 1975, the ‘Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*’, also known as the ‘Nomenclature of *The Lord of the Rings*’, written by J. R. R. Tolkien and edited by his son, Christopher Tolkien, was published for the first time in Lobdell (1975). This text begins with the following introduction by the editor: “These Notes on Nomenclature were made by J. R. R. Tolkien to assist translators of the book into other languages. They were composed when only the Swedish and Dutch translations had appeared” (Tolkien 1975, 153). In this guide, the first section is ‘Names of Persons and Peoples’, but no names that could be considered first names can be found here. The only name that is relevant for this paper is Baggins, about which Tolkien says the following: “Baggins. Intended to recall ‘bag’ – compare Bilbo’s conversation with Smaug in *The Hobbit* – and meant to be associated (by hobbits) with Bag End (that is, the end of a ‘bag’ or ‘pudding bag’ = cul-de-sac), the local name for Bilbo’s house. [...] The translation should contain an element meaning ‘sack, bag’” (Tolkien 1975, 160).

In the next section, let us examine the forms of the most frequently used personal names in the Irish translation of *The Hobbit*. The English names were taken from Tolkien (1998).

## **2. Some basic rules of Irish spelling and pronunciation**

Native Irish does not have an organically developed standard version of pronunciation but is spoken in the form of three major and some minor dialects; however, the editors of the *Foclóir Póca* dictionary (Ó Liatháin et al. 1986) designed an artificial standard in order to be able to provide an abstract representation of the phonemic contrasts that exist in Irish. As the editors state in the ‘Phonetic Preface’, “The system of pronunciation proposed here contains all the essential contrasts found in the three main dialects. It does not correspond in every detail to any one dialect but contains a core common to them all” (Ó Liatháin et al. 1986, xii). This system is applied here when giving the postulated Irish pronunciation of the most important personal names in *The Hobbit*. The vowel symbols in the transcription are identical with those of the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet), while the consonants are represented by slightly modified symbols. The *Foclóir Póca*

lists 37 consonant phonemes (i.e., sounds that are able to distinguish between meanings) for Irish Gaelic, 34 of which represent ‘broad’ and ‘slender’ consonant pairs. The term ‘broad’ refers to velarised or non-palatal consonants: here, during articulation, the tongue moves close to the velum, that is, the back of the roof of the mouth. ‘Slender’ denotes palatalised or palatal consonants: here, during articulation, the tongue moves near the hard palate, towards the front of the roof of the mouth.<sup>2</sup> In general, it could be said that the broad consonants are ‘harder’, while the slender consonants are ‘softer’ in pronunciation. The slender consonants are marked with a superscript ‘ symbol in the transcription. For example, /n/ is broad, corresponding roughly to the ‘n’ sound in English **now** or Hungarian **nap** ‘day; sun’, while /n’/ is slender, corresponding roughly to how the <n><sup>3</sup> is pronounced in English **venue** or Hungarian **nyúl** ‘rabbit, hare; reach out’. Similarly, /s/ is broad and should be pronounced as the <s> in **see**, while /s’/ is slender, and it should be sounded as <sh> in **shoe**. (This latter sound is normally represented by the symbol /ʃ/ in the IPA.) Thus, there are altogether 17 broad–slender consonant phoneme pairs in Irish. Consonant phonemes that do not come in broad–slender pairs are /h/, /w/ and /d’z’/ (which equals /dʒ/ in the IPA) (Ó Liatháin et al. 1986, xiv–xv).

The broad versus slender consonant distinction is so important in Irish that it is consistently represented in spelling. The vowel letters <a>, <á>, <o>, <ó>, <u>, and <ú> appear beside broad consonants, while the vowel letters <e>, <é>, <i>, and <í> appear beside slender consonants. A consonant inside a word will be normally flanked by vowel letters belonging to the same category. One consequence of these spelling rules is that many vowel letters in Irish words will not be pronounced, as their role is simply to indicate whether the adjacent consonant letter represents a broad or a slender consonant. So, for example, in the name **Seán** /s’a:n/ the <e> is not pronounced as it simply indicates that the preceding <s> is slender so it should be pronounced /s’/ as the <sh> in **shoe** and not as the <s> in **see**. Similarly, in the Irish Gaelic version of Bilbo’s name, **Biolbó**, the <o> is silent, as its role is to indicate that the following ‘l’ and ‘b’ are broad; or in the Irish version of Dori’s name, **Dóirí**, the <i> again is silent as it only indicates that the following ‘r’ is slender<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The terms ‘broad’ and ‘slender’ are going to be used in this article. Although ‘velarised’ and ‘non-palatal’ do not quite refer to the same phenomenon, as neither do ‘palatalised’ and ‘palatal’, these differences are not relevant for the topic of this article; and neither are the dialectal differences in the degree of palatalisation.

<sup>3</sup> As usual in papers in linguistics, spelling is indicated throughout between pointed brackets, while pronunciation is given between slashes, indicating abstract phonemic notation.

<sup>4</sup> A slender ‘r’ is ‘softer’ than a broad one, almost as if there was a /j/ sound (like the first sound in **you**) pronounced with it. Many sound files in the *New English–Irish Dictionary* (focloir.ie) illustrate the difference. For example, the word **mór** (in the entry ‘big’) ends in a broad ‘r’, while the word **cóir** (in the entry ‘justice’) ends in a slender one. These words can be listened to in the three major dialects of Irish Gaelic by clicking on the letters C, M and U beside the speaker icon.

### 3. The spelling and the pronunciation of first names in the nominative

*An Hobad* has a short appendix which contains a pronunciation guide. The pronunciation is given in the IPA for fourteen common nouns and proper names: **Bladorthin**, **cram**, **Dorwinion**, **Eldamar**, **Elrond**, **Esgaroth**, **Galion**, **Girion**, **Glamdring**, **Gondolin**, **Gundabad**, **mithril**, **Moria**, **Orcrist** (Tolkien 2012, 267). Of these words, only the personal names **Elrond** and **Girion** are discussed in this study. The transcription given for these names is respectively [ˈɛlrɒnd] and [ˈɡirɪɒn]<sup>5</sup>, and so this is what is going to be given here as well. However, for all the other names, as they do not appear in the pronunciation guide, only a postulated pronunciation will be given based on the letter-to-sound rules of Irish Gaelic, as laid out in the *Foclóir Póca* dictionary referred to above.

In Table 1, the spelling and pronunciation of first names in the nominative are presented in alphabetical order. In two of the three major dialects, the stress falls on the first syllable of a word, and this pattern is given here, with the stress indicated by the ' symbol before the stressed syllable. The colon after a vowel indicates that it is long, e.g., /o:/.

Note that in *The Hobbit*, the names do not have accents, while in *The Lord of the Rings* such diacritics appear in the names of **Dáin**, **Glóin**, **Óin**, **Thráin**, and **Thrór**, indicating the Old Norse spelling (Tolkien 2007). The first four names among these are supposed to be disyllabic. It is not clear if their Irish versions are supposed to be disyllabic as well.

Original form of the name in <i>The Hobbit</i>	Irish form of the name	Postulated Irish pronunciation
Balin	Báilín	/ˈba:lˈi:nˈ/
Bard	Bard	/ˈba:rd/
Beorn	Béorn	/ˈbˈe:ərn/
Bifur	Bíofúr	/ˈbˈi:fu:r/
Bilbo	Biolbó	/ˈbˈilbo:/
Bofur	Bófúr	/ˈbo:fu:r/
Bombur	Bombúr	/ˈbombu:r/
Dain	Dáin	/ˈda:nˈ/

<sup>5</sup> The translator uses square brackets, which traditionally indicate phonetic rather than phonemic notation. (For the difference between phonetic and phonemic transcription, see ‘Phonetics: An Interactive Introduction’ at [australianlinguistics.com/speech-sounds/phonemic-vs-phonetic](http://australianlinguistics.com/speech-sounds/phonemic-vs-phonetic) – Reid n.d.). Also note that the possible slender quality of consonants is not indicated.

Original form of the name in <i>The Hobbit</i>	Irish form of the name	Postulated Irish pronunciation
Dori	Dóirí	/ˈdoːrˈiː/
Durin	Dúirín	/ˈduːrˈiːnˈ/
Dwalin	Dváilín	/ˈdvaːlˈiːnˈ/
Elrond	Elrond	/ˈɛlɾond/ <sup>6</sup>
Fili	Fílí	/ˈfˈiːlˈiː/
Gandalf	Gandalf	/ˈgandəlf/
Girion	Girion	/ˈgiriɔn/ <sup>7</sup>
Gloin	Glóin	/ˈɡloːnˈ/
Gollum	Golam	/ˈɡoləm/
Kili	Kílí	/ˈkˈiːlˈiː/
Nori	Nóirí	/ˈnoːrˈiː/
Oin	Óin	/oːnˈ/
Ori	Óirí	/ˈoːrˈiː/
Smaug	Smóg	/smoːɡ/
Thorin	Tóirín	/ˈtoːrˈiːnˈ/
Thrain	Tráin	/traːnˈ/
Thror	Trór	/troːr/

Table 1. The nominative form of non-English personal names in the Irish Gaelic translation of *The Hobbit*.

An attempt is made here to explain some of the translator's choices.

- The letter <w> is only used in Irish in some loanwords (e.g., **wigwam**), so **Dwalin's** name appears as **Dváilín**.
- The letter <k> is only used in proper names of foreign origin, for which **Kílí** is a good example here (Ó hAnluain 1960/1999, 1).

<sup>6</sup> This is the pronunciation provided by the translator. The postulated pronunciation based on letter-to-sound rules would be /ˈɛlɾənd/.

<sup>7</sup> This is the pronunciation provided by the translator. The postulated pronunciation based on letter-to-sound rules would be /ˈgˈirˈiən/.

- c) Modern Irish does not have interdental fricatives, so the initial consonant of **Thorin**, **Thrain** and **Thror** /θ/ is rendered as a /t/: **Tóirín**, **Tráin**, **Trór**. This sound needs to be spelt with a <t>, as <th> in Irish is pronounced as /h/.
- d) One may ask what guided the translator's choices as to the consonant quality (broad or slender) in the names in the Irish translation, i.e., why it is that the translator chose the form **Biolbó** /b'ílbo:/ and not **Bilbeo** /b'íl'b'ó:/, or **Dóirí** /'do:r'í:/ and not **Dóraí** /'do:ri:/. In the first case it could be argued that the pronunciation of **Biolbó** is closer to the pronunciation intended by Tolkien, while in the second case the final /i:/ may have influenced the translator as to the choice of the quality of the preceding consonant. However, it is not the purpose of this paper to try and account for the quality of each consonant in these names.
- e) **-ín** is a productive diminutive suffix in Irish which sometimes appears at the end of names: **Máire** – **Máirín** (anglicised as **Maureen**), **Séamas** – **Séamaisín**. Thus the **-ín** at the end of **Tóirín**, **Báilín**, **Dváilín** and **Dúirín** does not sound un-Irish. This suffix is also productive in Irish English in its anglicised form, **-een**; e.g., **dropeen** 'a small drop' ('dropeen', McMahon and O'Donoghue 2011) and **girleen** 'little girl' ('girleen', oed.com).
- f) In **Bíofúr**, **Bofúr** and **Bombúr** the vowel in the second syllable is long before the /r/. This reflects the sound pattern of Irish, as in *A Reverse Dictionary of Modern Irish* there is only one disyllabic word that ends in <ur> /əɾ/, while forty-nine that end in <úr> /u:r/ (Doyle and Gussmann 2004, 315).
- g) Some of the dwarves' names end in a long /i:/ in the Irish version: **Dóirí**, **Fílí**, **Kílí**, **Nóirí**, **Óirí**. Note that the vowels in the stressed syllables are also lengthened, becoming /o:/ and /i:/, respectively. According to *A Reverse Dictionary of Modern Irish*, almost all disyllabic words end in /i:/ rather than /ə/ (spelt as <i>) (Doyle and Gussmann 2004, 199 and 200–44). This means that here again, the pronunciation of these names is adjusted to Irish phonological patterns.
- h) The <ó> in **Smóg** approximates the English pronunciation of <au> in words such as **caught**, **haunt**, **sauce** /ɔ:/; however, in **Smaug** the vowel is /aʊ/ ('Smaug', wikipedia.org).
- i) Thorin's name is often accompanied by his epithet, Oakenshield. This was translated into Irish as **Tóirín na Scéithe Darach**, literally 'Thorin of the Shield of Oak'.

In the next table, the names of the trolls are presented. They represent a separate category as they are English names in the original text.

Original form of the name	Irish form of the name	Irish pronunciation
Bert	Beartla	/b'artlə/
Tom	Teaim	/t'am'/
William	Liam	/l'iam/

Table 2. English names in *The Hobbit* and their equivalents in the Irish Gaelic translation.

**Beartla** is an Irish male name, which derives from Bartholomew (Nielsen 1986, 30). The Irish version of **Thomas** is **Tomás**, and **Teaim** is probably the Irish transliteration of English **Tom**. Finally, **William** and **Liam** are both borrowings from Norman French, where the stress fell on the last syllable, and in Irish the unstressed syllable was lost. **Liam** is a very common name in Ireland. In the original English text, **William** is sometimes addressed with the hypocoristic form of his name, **Bill**. As there is no such form corresponding to **Liam**, **Liam** is what is used in these cases as well.

#### 4. The spelling and the pronunciation of family names in the nominative

In *The Hobbit*, some hobbit family names can also be found, for example **Baggins** and **Took**. **Baggins** is rendered as **Baigín** /'bag'í:n'/ in the Irish translation. The English word **bag** was borrowed into Irish as **baig**, a verb meaning 'to bag, to heap' ('baig', v, Ó Dónaill 1977/2005), while **-ín** is a very productive diminutive suffix in Irish, as mentioned earlier – however, diminutive suffixes cannot be attached to verbs, only to nouns. But in the *National Corpus of Irish* (Bhreathnach et al. 2024; henceforth *NCI*), there is a single example of the noun **baigín** from an Irish-language TV programme in the sentence *Níos fearr ná baigín sweets is dócha* ('Better than a small bag of sweets, probably')<sup>8</sup> ('baigín', *NCI*). Thus, this form seems to be the English noun **bag** with the Irish diminutive suffix, so the surname **Baigín** fulfils Tolkien's earlier cited wish that "[t]he translation should contain an element meaning 'sack, bag'" (Tolkien 1975, 160).

**Took** appears **Túc** as in **Beileadona Túc** (Tolkien 2012, 2) 'Belladonna Took' (Tolkien 1998, 13)<sup>9</sup>. The surname of one of the trolls, **William**, occurs once in the text as **Huggins** (Tolkien 1998, 54). **Huggins** is the diminutive form of **Hugh** (Hanks, Coates and McClure 2016, 1351). The Irish translation has **'Uiginn** /'ig'in'/ here (Tolkien 2012, 33), a shortened form of **Ó hUiginn** /o: 'hig'in'/ 'descendant of a viking'

<sup>8</sup> My translation.

<sup>9</sup> The English equivalents were taken from the 1998 edition of *The Hobbit* (Tolkien 1998).



(Irish **Uiginn** < Old Norse **víkingr**). This name is often anglicised as **Higgins** or **O’Higgins** (Hanks, Coates and McClure 2016, 1281 and 1992).

It should be noted here that most Irish surnames are made up of two elements, where the first element means son or daughter (**mac** or **nic/ní**) or grandson/descendant (**ó**), followed by a patronymic, as shown in the first column of Table 3. In the anglicised forms, only the first elements denoting males (**Mc** and **O’**) appear. However, there is another way of using family names in Irish Gaelic: “[t]he usual way of referring to somebody by surname is to make an ordinary noun of the name by adding **ach**” (Ó Sé 2010, 226). In such cases, the surname has to be preceded by the definite article **an**. Some examples from Irish can be seen in the table below:

Surname	Pronunciation	Surname with <i>-ach</i>	Pronunciation	Anglicised form
Mac Mathúna	/mak 'mahu:nə/	an Mathúnach	/ən 'mahu:nəx/	McMahon
Ó Briain	/o: 'b'r'ien'/	an Brianach	/ən 'b'r'ienəx/	O’Brien
Ó Conaill	/o: 'konəl'/	an Conallach	/ən 'konələx/	O’Connell

Table 3. Different forms of some Irish surnames.

The suffix **-ach** /əx/ is also used in *An Hobad*, as both **Baigín** and **Túc** appear with the **-ach** suffix as well: **an Baigíneach** (Tolkien 2012, 263) ‘Mr Baggins’ (Tolkien 1998, 362), plural **na Baigínigh** (ibid., 1) ‘[T]he Bagginses’ (ibid., 12) and **na Túcaigh** (ibid., 2) ‘the Tooks’ (ibid., 13). (There is no singular **an Túcach** in the book.)

5. Initial mutations and their effects on the personal names in *An Hobad*

Irish Gaelic, just like the other Celtic languages (e.g., Scottish Gaelic, Welsh and Breton), often expresses grammatical relations with the help of initial mutations. This means that the first sound of a word may change depending on what precedes it. These rules also apply to proper nouns, although it is not compulsory to apply initial mutations to foreign names. An examination of the personal names in *An Hobad* reveals that the personal names used in the Irish translation of the novel behave like Irish names, as they can undergo aspiration (also known as lenition) (see 5.1), nasalisation (also known as eclipsis) (see 5.2), and can also acquire an **h-** when they begin with a vowel. The examples below show these initial changes on the personal names. Note that words that begin with **h**, **l**, **n** and **r** are not affected by any initial mutation.



### 5.1 Aspiration (lenition)

Although both ‘aspiration’ and ‘lenition’ are used for the phenomenon that is described in this paragraph, lenition would be the more accurate term for it. Lenition is a change in consonants whereby they become ‘weaker’ from the phonetic point of view (Hyman 1975, 165). In Irish Gaelic, the general rule is that the oral stops <p> /p/ - /p’/, <t> /t/ - /t’/, <c> /k/ - /k’/, <b> /b/ - /b’/, <d> /d/ - /d’/, <g> /g/ - /g’/, and the nasal stops <m> /m/ - /m’/ become fricatives or the semivowel /j/ (indicated as /γ/ in the system used by the *Foclóir Póca*), the fricatives <s> /s/ - /s’/ turn into the ‘weaker’ fricative /h/, and <f> /f/ - /f’/ disappear completely. When /s/ - /s’/ are followed by /k/ - /k’/, /m/ - /m’/, /p/ - /p’/, /t/ or /t’/, the initial consonant is not lenited. Thus, the name **Smóg** is not affected. Examples can be seen in Tables 4, 6 and 7 below. The term ‘aspiration’ is used ambiguously in phonological descriptions of different languages, sometimes referring to the /s/ > /h/ change (as in this case), sometimes denoting a puff of air which follows a consonant, which is indicated in phonetic transcription with a superscript ‘h’, as in English **put** [pʰʊt]. Note that the term ‘aspiration’ in the Irish context refers exclusively to the phenomenon of lenition described above; however, in spelling it is indicated by putting the letter <h> after the consonant affected. So, a lenited /b/, /b’/ will be spelt as <bh> in Irish Gaelic.

The table below contains examples of aspiration after certain prepositions that require it with the names given in alphabetical order and the postulated pronunciation provided in IPA. The symbol /γ/ denotes the voiced velar fricative – this is produced at the back of the mouth and can be compared to a kind of gargling sound. Its voiceless counterpart is /x/, which can also be found in some words used in Scottish English, e.g., **loch** ‘lake’ (a borrowing from Scottish Gaelic) or in the German words **Buch** ‘book’ and **machen** ‘make’ (the IPA symbol is also /x/). Slender /x’/ sounds like the consonant in German **ich** ‘I’ (the IPA symbol is /ç/).

The corresponding English text is provided for reference; note that the prepositions and the structures in the two languages often differ.

Name with aspiration (in Tolkien 2012)	Pronunciation	English version (in Tolkien 1998)
<i>a) Names of non-English origin in Tolkien's text</i>		
ar Bháilín (p. 82)	/er' 'va:l'i:n'/	(Gandalf called) to Balin (p. 120)
do Bhard (p. 219)	/də 'va:rd/	(but not) of Bard (p. 301)
do Bhéorn (p. 113)	/də 'v'e:ərn/	for Béorn (p. 160)

Name with aspiration (in Tolkien 2012)	Pronunciation	English version (in Tolkien 1998)
ó Bhéorn (p. 133)	/o: 'v'ɛ:ərn/	of Béorn (p. 187)
ó Bhiolbó beag (p. 145)	/o: 'v'ilbo:/	from little Bilbo (p. 205)
de Bhombúr (p. 185)	/d'ə 'vombu:r/	except Bombur (p. 255)
ó Bhombúr (p. 132)	/o: 'vombu:r/	from Bombur (p. 186)
do Dháin (p. 242)	/də 'ɣa:n'/	telling Dain (p. 333)
ó Dháin (p. 242)	/o: 'ɣa:n'/	of Dain (p. 332)
ar Dhóirí (p. 96)	/er' 'ɣo:r'i:/	(seized) Dori (p. 139)
ó Dhváilín (p. 27)	/o: 'ɣva:l'i:n'/	from Dwalin (p. 46)
ar Fhílí (p. 187)	/er' 'i:li:/	Fili (and Kili looked uncomfortable) (p. 258)
d'Fhílí (p. 142)	/'d'i:li:/	of Fili (p. 200)
ar Ghandalf (p. 7)	/er' 'ɣandəlf/	about Gandalf (p. 18)
do Ghandalf (p. 43)	/də 'ɣandəlf/	to Gandalf (p. 68)
ó Ghlóin (p. 53)	/o: 'ɣlo:n'/	Glóin (wanted to) (p. 79)
do Gholam (p. 67)	/də 'ɣoləm/	for Gollum (p. 99)
ó Gholam (p. 72)	/o: 'ɣoləm/	Gollam wanted (p. 107)
ar Khílí (p. 187)	/er' 'x'i:l'i:/	Fili and Kili (looked uncomfortable) (p. 258)
de Khílí (p. 233)	/d'ə 'x'i:l'i:/	except (...) Kili (p. 320)
ar Thóirín (p. 248)	/er' 'ho:r'i:n'/	(They had forgotten) Thorin! (p. 340)
do Thóirín (p. 43)	/də 'ho:r'i:n'/	to Thorin (p. 68)
don Bhaigíneach (p. 137)	/dən 'vag'i:n'əx/	to Mr. Baggins (p. 193)
sa Bhaigíneach Uasal (p. 83)	/sə 'vag'i:n'əx 'uəsəl/	Mr. Baggins (has more about him) (p. 121)
<i>b) Names of English origin in Tolkien's text</i>		
do Bheartla (p. 37)	/də 'v'artlə/	to Bert (p. 59)

Table 4. Aspiration (lenition) of first names and the surname Baggins (**an Baigíneach**) in *An Hobad*.

As the examples above show, these names behave like Irish names. The following should be noted here:

- a) The <o> /ə/ of the preposition **do** is dropped when it is followed by a word beginning with a vowel. When a word beginning with an /f/ + a vowel is lenited, then the consonant completely disappears, thus the lenited form of the word begins with a vowel. This is why we have **d'Fhílí** /d'í:li:/ instead of **\*do Fhílí** /də 'í:li:/.
- b) As stated above, the letter <k> is very rarely used in Irish. In the *NCI*, the <K> /k/ is usually not lenited: e.g., **ó Kitty** 'from Kitty' (two examples) but no **ó Khitty**; **ó Kevin** 'from Kevin' (36 examples) but no **ó Khevin**; **ó Katherine** 'from Katherine' (three examples) but no **ó Khatherine**. These data are all the more remarkable as the name **Kevin** comes from the Irish name **Caoimhín**. In *An Hobad*, the initial consonant of **Kilí** is consistently lenited when this is required by the grammatical rules of Irish Gaelic.
- c) As far as the names of the trolls are concerned, **Beartla**, as expected, is affected by aspiration; however, **Teaim** is not: **do Teaim** (Tolkien 2012, 37) /də 't'am/ 'to [...] Tom' (Tolkien 1998, 59) (the expected form would be **do Theaim** /də 'ham/).

## 5.2 Nasalisation (eclipsis)

In the case of nasalisation, all the vowels and the consonants <b> /b/ - /b'/, <c> /k/ - /k'/, <d> /d/ - /d'/, <f> /f/ - /f'/, <g> /g/ - /g'/, <p> /p/ - /p'/, <t> /t/ - /t'/ are affected. The term 'nasalisation' is somewhat misleading, as only the voiced stops (/b/ - /b'/, /d/ - /d'/, /g/ - /g'/) turn into nasal sounds, while the other consonants that are affected – and which are voiceless – will become voiced. In orthography, the consonant letter(s) indicating the new initial sound in the word will be placed before the original word-form, thus in spelling it will be obvious what the word stem is. In the case of words beginning with a vowel, an <n> will be prefixed to them. In proper nouns the nasalisation is indicated with a lowercase letter followed by the original capital letter. Examples of both types of change that are described as 'nasalisation' (that is, nasalisation and voicing) can be found in the table below.

First names are less prone to nasalisation than common nouns, as mostly it is a preposition followed by the definite article that triggers this type of initial mutation, and personal names are not normally used with an article in Irish. However, as mentioned earlier, the **-ach** suffix can be attached to family names and then they will be preceded by the definite article; when certain prepositions are placed before them, nasalisation occurs. As can be seen in Table 5 below, the family names in *An Hobad* follow the rules of Irish Gaelic in this respect.

Name with nasalisation (in Tolkien 2012)	Pronunciation	English version (in Tolkien 1998)
ag an mBaigíneach (p. 74)	/eg' ən 'mag'i:n'əx/	The Baggins has got it ... (p. 109)
faoin <sup>10</sup> mBaigíneach (p. 145)	/fi:n' 'mag'i:n'əx/	of Mr Baggins (p. 204)
duine de shinsir na dTúcach (p. 2)	/nə 'du:kəx/	one of the Took ancestors (p. 13)

Table 5. Nasalisation of family names in *An Hobad*.

### 5.3 <h> /h/ attached to a word beginning with a vowel

This initial mutation is not as frequent as the previous ones, as fewer words cause this type of alternation. One of the most common ones is the preposition **le** ‘with; to, for; by, against’. Names beginning with a vowel do get an <h> attached to them in *An Hobad*: **le hÓin** (Tolkien 2012, 29) /l'ə 'ho:n'/ ‘not even Óin’ (Tolkien 1998, 49), **le hElrond** (ibid., 259) /l'ə 'hɛlrɒnd/ ‘to Elrond’ (ibid., 357). Just like in the case of nasalisation, the initial mutation is indicated with a lowercase letter before the capitalised one.

## 6. The vocative and genitive cases

Irish personal names have a vocative and a genitive case, which are identical in form. The vocative has to be used when addressing somebody, when calling to somebody. The rules for the formation of the vocative case of male names are the following:

- the name has to be preceded by the vocative particle **a** /ə/, which lenites the following name; AND
- in names for males in most cases (that is, in those that belong to the first noun declension), if the name ends in a broad consonant, the final consonant is made slender, that is, it is palatalised.<sup>11</sup> This is indicated in orthography with the insertion of the letter <i> before the last consonant or consonant cluster. Thus, the vocative of **Tomás** /toma:s/ is **a Thomáis** /ə 'homa:s'/, and the vocative of **Séamas** /s'e:məs/ is **a Shéamais** /ə 'he:məs'/ (The name **Hamish** used in English originates from the vocative form of **Séamas** ‘James’.)

<sup>10</sup> Note that **faoin** is the preposition **faoi** ‘about’ + the definite article **an**.

<sup>11</sup> When a broad consonant is made slender, it is palatalised; the name of the process is palatalisation.

The genitive forms are the same as the vocative ones, but of course the vocative particle is not used before them.

Note, however, that it is not compulsory to apply the above rules to foreign names or names that are used in their non-Irish form. For example, the name **Benjamin** is not lenited in the vocative in three examples found in the *NCI* (**a Benjamin**), while it is in six examples (**a Bhenjamin**). **Peter**, the Irish form of which is **Peadar**, is not lenited in seven examples (**a Peter**), while it is in eighteen (**a Pheter**).

There are plenty of examples of both the vocative and the genitive of personal names in *An Hobad*. A very nice example can be seen on p. 136, where Bilbo is lost in Mirkwood and calls out the names of all the dwarves: “A Dhóirí, a Nóirí, a Óirí, a Óin, a Ghlóin, a Fhílí, a Khílí, a Bhombúir, a Bhíofúir, a Bhófúir, a Dhváilín, a Bháilín, a Thóirín na Scéithe Darach” (Tolkien 2012, 136).

As the final consonants of only names ending in a broad consonant can be affected in the vocative and the genitive, the names are presented in two different categories. Table 6 below shows examples of the vocative and genitive of male names ending in a vowel or a slender consonant in the nominative case in the Irish Gaelic translation, where only lenition is expected, while in Table 7 the same cases for the names ending in a broad consonant can be seen – here both lenition and palatalisation of the final consonant would be expected. (Names that are not supposed to change in the vocative and the genitive – e.g., **Nóirí**, **Óin**, **Óirí** are not listed here.) If no vocative or genitive form is given here, then it means that it does not appear in *An Hobad*. (Separate searches were made for such forms in the *NCI* in order to make sure that none were overlooked.)

Vocative/Genitive (in Tolkien 2012)	Pronunciation	English version (in Tolkien 1998)
<i>a) Names of non-English origin in Tolkien's text</i>		
a Bháilín (p. 136)	/ə 'va:l'i:n'/	Balin (p. 191)
de dhoras Bháilín (p. 157)	/'va:l'i:n'/	(First he unlocked) Balin's door (p. 219)
a Bhiolbó (p. 136)	/ə 'v'ilbo:/	Bilbo (p. 219)
i lámh Bhiolbó (p. 70)	/'v'ilbo:/	in Bilbo's hand (p. 104)
a Dháin (p. 245)	/ə 'ɣa:n'/	O Dain! (p. 336)

Vocative/Genitive (in Tolkien 2012)	Pronunciation	English version (in Tolkien 1998)
ar shála Dháin (p. 245)	/ʔa:n'/	on the heels of Dain (p. 337)
a Dhóirí (p. 136)	/ə 'ɣo:r'i:/	Dori (p. 191)
rúitíní Dhóirí (p. 95)	/'ɣo:r'i:/	Dori's ankles (p. 138)
Lá Dhúirín (p. 48)	/'ɣu:r'i:n'/	Durin's Day (p. 73)
de chine Dhúirín (p. 169)	/'ɣu:r'i:n'/	of the race of Durin (p. 235)
BUT: de sliocht Dúirín (p. 173)	/'du:r'i:n'/	of the race of Durin (p. 238)
a Dhváiín (p. 136)	/ə 'ɣva:l'i:n'/	Dwalin (p. 191)
BUT: cochall uaine Dváiín (p. 7)	/'dva:l'i:n'/	Dwalin's green hood (p. 19)
a Fhílí (p. 136)	/ə 'i:l'i:/	Fili (p. 191)
le cúnamh fonnmhár Fhílí agus Khílí (p. 172)	/'i:l'i:/	With the willing help of Fili and Kili (p. 237)
BUT: bail Filí (p. 142)	/'f'i:l'i:/	(than) Fili (p. 200)
a Ghlóin (p. 136)	/ə 'ɣlo:n'/	Glóin (p. 191)
a Khílí (p. 136)	/ə 'x'i:l'i:/	Kili (p. 191)
le cúnamh fonnmhár Fhílí agus Khílí (p. 172)	/'x'i:l'i:/	With the willing help of Fili and Kili (p. 237)
a Thóirín (p. 136)	/ə 'ho:r'i:n'/	Thorin (p. 191)
féasóg Thóirín (p. 86)	/'ho:r'i:n'/	Thorin's beard (p. 126)
<i>b) Names of English origin in Tolkien's text</i>		
a Bheartla (p. 32)	/ə 'v'artlə/	Bert (p. 53)
i lapa mór Bheartla (p. 33)	/'v'artlə/	in Bert's big paw (p. 55)

Table 6. The vocative and genitive forms of male names that end in a vowel or a slender consonant in the nominative case in *An Hobad*.

In almost all the cases, we get the expected lenition. The exceptions are:

- a) In **bail Fílí**, one would expect **Fílí** to be lenited in the genitive case. Also, there is a typographical error here, as in all the other cases **Fílí** is spelt with two long <í>-s, and here the first <i> does not have the lengthmark.
- b) One would expect the genitive of **Dváiín** to be **Dhváiín** based on the two examples of the vocative in the book (**a Dhváiín**), but the only genitive form to be found is not lenited: **cochall uaine Dváiín** (Tolkien 2012, 7) 'Dwalin's green hood' (Tolkien 1998, 19).
- c) **Teaim** is not lenited in the vocative (it has been shown in section 5.1 that it is not lenited either after prepositions that would require it): **a Teaim** (Tolkien 2012, 33) (/ə 't'am'/) 'Tom' (Tolkien 1998, 55).
- d) In the case of **sliocht Dúirín** (Tolkien 2012, 173), according to one of the sub-rules of aspiration, the /d/ is not lenited after a word ending in a /t/ (Ó hAnluain 1960/1999, 25).

Vocative/Genitive (in Tolkien 2012)	Pronunciation	English version (in Tolkien 1998)
<i>a) With lenition + palatalisation</i>		
a Bhíofúir (p. 136)	/ə 'v'i:fu:r'/	Bifur (p. 191)
a Bhófúir (p. 136)	/ə 'v'o:fu:r'/	Bofur (p. 191)
a Bhombúir (p. 136)	/ə 'vombu:r'/	Bombur (p. 191)
ar dhroim Bhombúir (p. 59)	/ 'vombu:r'/	on Bombur's back (p. 88)
a Ghandailf (p. 47)	/ə 'ɣandəl'f'/	Gandalf (p. 71)
BUT: a Ghandalf (p. 109)	/ə 'ɣandəlf/	Gandalf (p. 154)
capall Ghandailf (p. 42)	/ 'ɣandəl'f'/	Gandalf's horse (p. 66)
BUT: tuairim Ghandalf (p. 81)	/ 'ɣandəlf/	and Gandalf was saying (p. 118)
BUT: focail Gandailf (p. 239)	/ 'gandəl'f'/	- [Gandalf's word] (p. 328)
Lómharchloch Thráin (p. 240)	/hra:n'/	the Arkenstone of Thrain (p. 330)



Vocative/Genitive (in Tolkien 2012)	Pronunciation	English version (in Tolkien 1998)
BUT túslitreacha (Tróir agus) Tráin (p. ix)	/tra:n'/	the initials of (Thror and) Thrain (p. 10)
halla mór Thróir (p. 212)	/hro:r'/	the great chamber of Thror (p. 291)
BUT túslitreacha Tróir (p. ix)	/tro:r/	the initials of Thror (p. 10)
<i>b) With lenition where possible, but no palatalisation</i>		
A Bhard a chroí! (p. 237)	/ə'va:rd/	My dear Bard! (p. 326)
teachtairí Bhard (p. 223)	/'va:rd/	Bard's messengers (p. 306)
i ngairdín Bhéorn (p. 110)	/v'e:ərn/	in Beorn's garden (p. 156)
BUT: Halla Béorn (p. 107)	/b'e:ərn/	- [Beorn's hall]
comhairle Elrond (p. 49)	/'ɛlrɒnd/	(by the wise) advice of Elrond (p. 75)
de shliocht Ghirion (p. 220)	/'ɣ'irɪɒn/ <sup>12</sup>	of the line of Girion (p. 302)
scéal Gholam (p. 145)	/'ɣoləm/	the Gollum story (p. 204)
a Smóg (p. 196)	/smo:g/	O Smaug (p. 269)
de shúil chlé Smóg (p. 195)	/smo:g/	of Smaug's left eye (p. 269)

Table 7. The vocative and genitive forms of male names that end in a broad consonant in the nominative case in *An Hobad*.

The examples show that there is some inconsistency in the vocative and genitive forms of the names that belong to this category:

- a) The vocative and genitive forms of **Gandalf** are not consistent. The vocative appears in two versions: **a Ghandailf** (Tolkien 2012, 47) (with lenition and pala-

<sup>12</sup> Palatal /ɣ'/ is like the initial sound in **you**, which is normally represented by /j/.

talisation) and **a Ghandalf** (ibid., 109) (with lenition and without palatalisation). A search for these two forms in the *NCI* will give two examples of the former and four examples of the latter. The genitive of this name appears in three different forms: as **Ghandailf** (ibid., 42), as **Ghandalf** (ibid., 81) and as **Gandailf** (ibid., 239). There are altogether three examples of the first form, seven of the second and two of the last one in *An Hobad*. It seems that this is the name which is the least consistent as far as its various forms are concerned, and this was already noted by Ó Coileáin (2012, 26).

- b) The genitive of **Tráin** and **Trór** sometimes appear with lenition, and sometimes without it. Some examples can be seen in the table above, while some more are presented below (Tolkien 2012):

“Cinnté, a Thóirín mic Thráin mhic Thróir!” (p. 177) ‘Certainly, O Thorin Thrain’s son Thrór’s son!’ (p. 244)

“Tóirín mac Tráin mac Tróir Rí faoin Sliabh!” (p. 173) ‘Thorin son of Thrain son of Thrór King under the Mountain!’ (p. 238)

“Is mise Tóirín mac Tráin mhic Tróir Rí faoin Sliabh!” (p. 174) ‘I am Thorin son of Thrain son of Thrór King under the Mountain!’ (p. 239)

In the inscription on the map, the form of the genitive is **Thróir: Léarscáil Thróir** (p. xii) ‘Thrór’s Map’ (p. 6).

- c) **Halla Béorn** is the title of the illustration on p. 107, and this is the only example where the genitive form of this name appears without lenition.

Furthermore, it can be seen that the final consonants in the vocative and genitive forms of the names **Bard**, **Béorn**, **Elrond**, **Girion**, **Golam** and **Smóg** are not palatalised. It should be noted here that **bard** exists as a common noun in Irish, meaning ‘poet, bard’, and also as a surname **Mac an Bhaird**, ‘son of the bard’ (anglicised as McWard, MacEward or Ward). So, the genitive and vocative forms are **bhaird** /va:r’d’/, and not **Bhard** /va:rd/, as in the translation. With this different genitive and vocative form the translator may have intended to indicate that the name **Bard** in *The Hobbit* is not the same as the Irish word **bard**.

Finally, the surname **an Baigíneach** follows the rules of Irish noun declensions. Nouns in **-ach** belong to the first group, thus both in the vocative and in the genitive the initial consonant is lenited, where possible, and the final consonant is made

slender. Thus, we have vocative **a Bhaigínigh** (Tolkien 2012, 225) ‘Baggins’ (Tolkien 1998, 309) and genitive **(i mbróga) an Bhaigínigh** (ibid., 62) ‘(in) Mr Baggins’ (place) (ibid., 92).

## 7. Influence of the translation and conclusion

It is fascinating to see how a translation of a text into a language that it has not yet existed in can open the door to new ways of thinking and speaking about a certain topic. The Irish-language version of Wikipedia, *An Vicipéid*, has a page with the title *An Hobad, nó Anonn agus Ar Ais Arís* (‘The Hobbit, or There and Back Again’), which uses the names that appear in Williams’ translation. The page history reveals that the page was created on 5 January 2011 by the publisher (*An Vicipéid* 2025) – some time before the publication of the book. Thus, these names have acquired a new lease of life on the internet.

The translation has been digitised and is included in the *National Corpus of Irish*. One cannot access the full, continuous text, but all of the words can be searched for, the hits appear in context, and concordances can be created for them. The availability of this text in this corpus was very useful for this research.

As far as the actual forms of the names are concerned, the analysis of most of the personal names in the Irish Gaelic translation of *The Hobbit* has shown that the non-English names are aligned with the phonology of the Irish language, and apart from a few inconsistencies, are treated as Irish names from the morpho-phonological point of view (i.e., with regard to initial mutations). The inconsistencies are almost exclusively found in the genitive and vocative forms of the personal names, as some of them appear both with and without lenition; moreover, the final consonant in the genitive and vocative of the name Gandalf is not always palatalised. Although the final consonant of not all Irish male names has to be palatalised in these cases, it would still be interesting to know why the translator decided to apply palatalisation in certain names in the genitive and vocative, but decided not to do this in the case of some other names. In spite of these inconsistencies, it is hoped that it has been convincingly shown that the names represent a successful attempt at nativisation.

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