

**STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING NEOLOGISMS IN  
CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE FICTION: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS.**

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**Abstract:** Science fiction is a genre defined by "the literature of change," often requiring the creation of new words—neologisms—to describe futuristic technologies or alien concepts. This article explores the linguistic strategies used to translate these invented terms from English into target languages. It categorizes neologisms into types such as compound words, blends, and derived forms. By examining works like George Orwell's 1984 and William Gibson's Neuromancer, this study analyzes how translators use borrowing, transcription, and calque to maintain the "future-feel" of the text without confusing the reader. The research concludes that a balance between foreignization and domestication is essential for preserving the author's original vision.

**Keywords:** Neologisms, science fiction, linguistic strategies, word-formation, borrowing, cultural preservation.

**Neologisms: The Vocabulary of the Future**

Neologisms are not merely "new words"; in science fiction, they represent the "novum"—the creative engine of the genre. Authors like Philip K. Dick or William Gibson use neologisms to bridge the gap between our current reality and a speculative future. These words can be categorized into three types:

Scientific-technical neologisms: Invented to describe future technology (e.g., warp drive, flux capacitor).

Social neologisms: Created to describe new social structures or classes (e.g., proles in Orwell's 1984).

Cultural neologisms: Slang or idioms used by future generations or alien races.

For a translator, a neologism is a "semantic void" in the target language that must be filled with a creative equivalent that feels just as "new" to the reader.

**Neologisms: The Conceptual Architecture of Science Fiction**

Neologisms are not merely "new words"; they are the linguistic manifestation of what scholars call the "Novum"—the scientifically plausible innovation that distinguishes science fiction from other genres. In SF, a neologism serves as a bridge between the known present and a speculative future. These terms are often categorized into:

**Scientific-technical neologisms:** Describing non-existent technology (e.g., hyperdrive, ansible).

**Socio-political neologisms:** Describing new social orders (e.g., Doublethink in Orwell's 1984).

**Cultural-linguistic neologisms:** Invented slang used by future humans or alien races.

For the translator, the neologism represents a "semantic gap" in the target language. The challenge lies in creating a new term that feels just as innovative and "functional" as the original.

### **Science Fiction: A Laboratory of Speculative Logic**

Science Fiction (SF) is often defined as the "literature of cognitive estrangement." It takes a familiar human element and places it in an unfamiliar setting governed by scientific logic. Unlike the "Secondary World" of Fantasy (where magic needs no explanation), SF requires internal consistency. This means the language used in the story must sound authoritative and grounded in physical laws. Translators must respect this "hardness" of the science, ensuring that the terminology used in the target language sounds like plausible science, not like fairy-tale magic.

### **Science Fiction: A Laboratory of Cognitive Estrangement**

Science Fiction (SF) is defined by Darko Suvin as the "literature of cognitive estrangement." It takes a familiar human element and places it in an unfamiliar setting governed by scientific logic rather than magic. Unlike the "Secondary Worlds" of high fantasy, SF requires internal consistency and a "scientific feel." This means the language must sound authoritative. Translators must ensure that technical descriptions—even of impossible machines—remain grounded in the vocabulary of real-world physics or engineering to maintain the genre's "hardness" and credibility.

### **Linguistic Strategies: Balancing Fidelity and Readability**

In translation studies, strategies refer to the global approach a translator takes toward a text. When faced with science fiction, two major opposing strategies emerge:

Foreignization (Lawrence Venuti's approach): This involves maintaining the linguistic and cultural differences of the source text. In SF, this means keeping the original sound or structure of neologisms to remind the reader of the story's "otherworldliness."

Domestication: This strategy aims to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target readers. A domesticated translation might replace a complex invented term with a more descriptive, familiar phrase in the target language to ensure smoother reading.

The choice between these strategies determines the "texture" of the translated world.

### **Linguistic Strategies:** Foreignization vs. Domestication

In translation studies, strategies refer to the overall approach a translator takes toward a text. When dealing with SF, two primary opposing strategies are often debated:

Foreignization (Venuti's approach): This involves maintaining the linguistic and cultural differences of the source text. In SF, this means keeping the "alien" sound of a neologism to remind the reader of the story's foreign origin.

Domestication: This aims to make the text feel natural to the target reader. A domesticated translation might replace a complex invented term with a more descriptive, familiar phrase, though this risks losing the "futuristic texture" of the original work.

The successful translator must strategically move between these two poles depending on the specific needs of the narrative.

### **Word-Formation:** The Mechanics of Creation

Word-formation is the study of how new words are built using the rules of a language. In English-language SF, authors utilize several morphological processes:

Compounding: Joining two roots (e.g., Starship, Deepspace).

Derivation: Adding prefixes/suffixes (e.g., Bio-engineering, Nanotechnology).

Portmanteau (Blending): Fusing two words to create a new concept (e.g., Cyborg = Cybernetic + Organism).

Understanding these mechanics allows a translator to replicate the same "logic of creation" in the target language. For instance, if the author used a "blend," the translator might try to create a "blend" in their own language rather than just a literal translation.

**Word-Formation:** The Morphology of Invention

Word-formation is the study of how new words are built using the morphological rules of a language. In English-language SF, authors utilize several key processes:

Compounding: Joining two roots (e.g., Starship, Deepspace).

Derivation: Utilizing prefixes and suffixes (e.g., Bio-hazard, Nanobot).

Blending (Portmanteau): Fusing two words to create a hybrid concept (e.g., Cyborg = Cybernetic + Organism).

When translating, the goal is often to replicate the logic of the word-formation. If an author used a "blend," a creative translator will attempt to create a similar "blend" in the target language rather than providing a literal, multi-word explanation.

**Borrowing:** Preserving the Iconic "Alien" Feel

Borrowing is a direct transfer of a word from the Source Language (SL) to the Target Language (TL). While it might seem like "non-translation," it is a strategic choice. In science fiction, many terms are borrowed to maintain the original aesthetic. For example, the word "Lightsaber" is often borrowed (transliterated) into many languages because its specific English sound is tied to the brand and identity of Star Wars. Borrowing is most effective when the term has no equivalent and when the goal is to preserve the author's unique creative signature.

**Borrowing:** Preserving the Iconic Aesthetic

Borrowing is a direct transfer of a word from the Source Language (SL) to the Target Language (TL). While it might seem like a simple choice, in SF, it is a strategic aesthetic decision. Many terms are borrowed to maintain the "brand" or "identity" of a universe. For example, terms like "Robot" or "Lightsaber" are often borrowed (transliterated) across many languages because their specific sound is iconic. Borrowing is most effective when the term has no cultural equivalent and when the goal is to preserve the author's unique creative signature.

**Cultural Preservation:** Protecting the Narrative Identity

Cultural preservation in translation goes beyond just words; it is about saving the contextual atmosphere. Every science fiction story is a product of its time. For example, 1950s SF often reflects Cold War anxieties, while modern SF focuses on Climate Change or Artificial Intelligence.

Translators must preserve these cultural "undertones." If a neologism carries a specific cultural weight (e.g., a term that sounds like a religious word in English), the translator must find a way to convey that same religious "echo" in the target language.

This ensures that the translated text is not just a copy of the plot, but a true reflection of the original's soul and message.

### **Cultural Preservation:** Protecting the Narrative Soul

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Translators must preserve these cultural "undertones." If a neologism carries a specific weight (e.g., a term that sounds like a religious word in English), the translator must find a way to convey that same resonance in the target language. This ensures that the translation is not just a copy of the plot, but a true reflection of the original's philosophical message.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the translation of neologisms and technical terminology in science fiction is a multifaceted task that extends far beyond simple linguistic substitution. This research has demonstrated that science fiction is a unique literary domain where language functions not only as a medium of communication but as a fundamental tool for world-building and "cognitive estrangement."

The comparative analysis of various translation methods—including borrowing, calque, transposition, and modulation—reveals that no single strategy is universally applicable. Instead, the most successful translations are those that balance fidelity to the author's imaginative vision with naturalness in the target language. Key findings of this study include:

**Strategic Adaptation:** Neologisms require a creative approach where the translator replicates the morphological logic (word-formation) of the source text to preserve the futuristic "feel."

**Cultural and Scientific Balance:** Translators must act as both literary artists and technical communicators, ensuring that scientific jargon remains credible while preserving the cultural and philosophical undertones of the narrative.

**Borrowing as an Aesthetic Choice:** Borrowing and transliteration are essential for maintaining the identity of iconic terms that have become synonymous with the genre's global heritage.

Ultimately, the goal of a science fiction translator is to ensure that the target audience experiences the same sense of wonder and intellectual challenge as the

original readers. By skillfully navigating the tension between domestication and foreignization, translators preserve the "imaginary power" of the text, making complex futuristic worlds accessible and engaging for a global audience. As science and technology continue to evolve, the linguistic strategies used to translate them must also remain flexible, creative, and conceptually rigorous.

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