

Kinga Klaudy 2000. Explicitation Strategies within Lexical and Grammatical Translational Operations. In: Lendvai, E. 2000. *Applied Russian Studies in Hungary*. Pécs: Krónika Kiadó. 101-113.

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Explicitation Strategies within Lexical and Grammatical Translational Operations

1. Operations in Translation

Explicitation is one of the most important operations in translation. The operational part of the translators' activity has already been extensively investigated in early translation studies by Vinay-Darbelnet (1958), Nida (1964), and especially such prominent Russian and Bulgarian translators as Barkhudarov (1975), Komissarov (1973), Shveitser (1973), Vaseva (1980). But in the last ten years it has become a rather neglected field, either ignored altogether or sometimes even accused of leading us in the wrong direction, taking translation research to a dead end.

Some claim that the investigation of the translation operations themselves, draws our attention away from meaning. According to them, after having extracted the meaning from the SL form, the translator should immediately forget

the SL form, and reformulate the message in his or her TL independently from the SL form. This would mean that the process of translation is nothing but an analysis of the SL followed by synthesis in the TL, or in other words, the decoding of the source text and the encoding of the target text, while there is no direct transcoding from the SL form to the TL form. In this interpretation the basis for the transfer is a semantic representation which is independent of the languages involved; thus the languages do not influence the process of translation at all. (Seleskovitch 1975:5)

Empirical studies of target texts translated from different source languages nevertheless reveal striking differences. Translated TL texts possess quantitatively measurable textual properties that differ from those of original TL texts. Moreover these properties differ according to the source language of the translated texts (Vehmas-Lehto 1989).

Hence my conviction that linguistic differences between the SL and the TL cannot be overlooked in Translation Studies. The claim that translation is a meaning-based phenomenon, does not make the differences between languages irrelevant. Meaning is a language-specific phenomenon, and translation operations consist of different transformations of and alterations to the source language meaning, which are introduced by translators consciously or

automatically. The conscious or non-conscious character of these operations could make another interesting topic for further research.

2. The classification of the operations

When translating any sentence, even the simplest one, from one language into another, translators carry out a number of mental operations. These operations can be classified on the basis of different principles, taking as the starting-point the reason for the operation, the purpose of the operation, the level of the operation etc. Thus, operations can be: obligatory, optional and facultative; automatic and non automatic; word-level, phrase-level, sentence-level and text-level operations; lexical, grammatical, stylistic and pragmatic, operations etc.

Some of these operations can be explained by the differences in the lexical and grammatical structure of the languages, - and are called "language-specific". Others are explained by the differences in culture, between generally shared knowledge of the members of different cultural communities - and may be called "culture-specific operations". Other operations can be explained neither by structural differences between the languages nor by cultural differences but rather by the nature of the translation-process itself, that is, by the necessity to express ideas in the target language which were originally conceived in the source

language. These operations can be called "translation-specific" operations.

The description of translational operations is in the centre of my book published recently under the title *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (1994). It is an attempt to describe a system of operations taking place in the translation of English/German/French/Russian into Hungarian and vice versa.

Though Hungarian is not a widely spoken language, looking at English/German/French/Russian from a Hungarian point of view can provide interesting insights. The Hungarian "looking glass" can reveal striking similarities between these otherwise divergent languages. Describing the translational behavior of Hungarian in the process of its translation into English/German/French/Russian, we in fact describe how a Finno-Ugric language works in the process of translation into the Indo-European languages, and vice versa.

All classifications, of course have their advantages and shortcomings. In my book I would like to offer an explanation, which tries to avoid mixing the different principles. The classification of operations followed here is based exclusively upon the "operational" - i.e., is, "technical" - properties of the operations (and not on their reason, purpose, etc.).

There are eleven main types of lexical operations: (1) **specification**

(**narrowing**) of meaning, (2) generalization (widening) of meaning, (3) **distribution of meaning**, (4) integration of meaning (5), **lexical additions**, (6) lexical omissions, (7) transposition of meaning, (8) substitution of meaning, (9) antonymic translation, (10) total transformation of meaning, (11) compensation for losses in translation.

There are eight main types of grammatical operations: (1) **grammatical specification**, (2) grammatical generalization, (3) **grammatical extension**, (4) grammatical compression, (5) **grammatical additions**, (6) grammatical omissions, (7) grammatical transpositions, (8) grammatical substitution.

The main types of lexical and grammatical operations, are further divided into subtypes, so that the total number of translational operations illustrated and explained in the book is approximately one hundred. The examples are taken from more than two hundred literary works and their translations, selected from the work of more than two hundred different translators. We are not going to describe unique, especially successful solutions of famous translators, but rather limit our research to the average.

In the above list, the term 'explicitation' is not found among the main operations listed. The reason for this is that explicitation is not one kind of operation, but a broader concept, since instead of only one, there are several

operations that make translated texts more explicit.

Specification of meaning, distribution of meaning, lexical additions, grammatical specification, grammatical extension, grammatical additions, all make the text more explicit, each in its own way. I would like to analyze below two translational operations from the point of view of manifestation, reason, source and type of explicitation.

The questions to be answered are the followings:

- (1) What are the forms of explicitation?
- (2) What are the reasons for explicitation - differences between languages, differences between the text-building strategies, differences between the expectations of the audience?
- (3) What is the source of explicitation? Where do the pluses come from? From inside or from outside? From the text or from an outside source?
- (4) Is there a certain balance in translation between explicitations and implicitations or does explicitation always dominate as a way of overcoming the difficulties of bilingual communication.
- (5) Is explicitation an overall strategy in bilingual communication or not?

3. Specification of meaning and explicitation

Specification of meaning is a lexical operation whereby the SL unit of a more general meaning is replaced by a TL unit of a more specific meaning. The main subtypes of specification of meaning in Hungarian → Indo-European translation are the following: (1) specification of the parts of the body in H→IE translation, (2) specification of time-expressions in IE→H translation, (3) specification of reporting verbs in IE→H translation, (4) specification of inchoative verbs in IE→H translation, (5) specification of semantically weak verbs in IE→H translation. Explicitation strategies will be illustrated by one type of specification of meaning, that is, the specification of reporting verbs in IE-H translation.

Verbs accompanying reported speech in literary works are generally semantically weak verbs in the four Indo-European languages (*to say, sagen, dire, skazat'*) but semantically rich verbs in Hungarian. Hungarian translators generally choose a more specific and less frequent verb in translation. But not because there are no reporting verbs in Hungarian of a more general character. The Hungarian verb "*mondani*" stands on the same level of generality as *to say, sagen, dire, skazat'*. It is Hungarian literary tradition which prompts the

translators to choose less frequent verbs in the Hungarian text, since it is perceived as too monotonous to repeat the same reporting verb throughout, thus, less frequent reporting verbs are preferred instead, or other verbs, capable of fulfilling the reporting function.

(1) "Oh, thank you, madam,' *said* Edna."

(2) "- Jaj, köszönöm, nagysága! - *hálálkodott* Edna." English: *say* →
Hungarian: *hálálkodik* ('express one's gratitude')

(3) "'Lesen wir weiter!' *sagte* Margarete, und ihre Stimme klang dunkel,
voll und warm wie vorher."

(4) "- Olvassunk tovább, - *legyintett* Margit, és hangja újból olyan
melegen, telin, felszabadultan csengett, mint azelőtt."
German: *sagen* ('say') → Hungarian: *legyint* (literally: 'chase
away a fly')

(5) "- Laisse-moi!, *dit* elle, tu me chiffonnes."

(6) "- Vigyázz! - *türelmetlenkedett* Emma. - Összegyűröd a ruhámat."
French: *dire* ('say') → Hungarian: *türelmetlenkedik* ('lose
patience', 'get impatient')

(7) "- Sto, sto, sto? - *skazal* znachitelnoye litso."

(8) „- Micsoda? - *szörnyülködött* a tekintélyes személy." Russian: *skazat'*
(‘say’) → Hungarian: *szörnyülködik* (‘be terrified’, ‘be
horrified’)

What kind of explicitation can be registered in lexical specifications? As we have seen in the case of the specification of reporting verbs, wordcount will not grow, but target language words will be more specific, more concrete. This kind of explicitation is not obligatory at all, because Hungarian has a set of reporting verbs with general meaning. The reason for this kind of explicitation is again to be found in Hungarian literary tradition, which prefers the use of more specific reporting verbs, as I have shown (Klaudy 1987) by a comparative statistical analysis of the occurrence of reporting verbs in Hungarian and Russian literary works. The source for the additional meaning is in the interpretation of the actual situation of the dialogue, the interpretation of the relationship between characters, their state of mind, etc.

As for the explicitation/implication reciprocity, we observed more specification in the IE-H direction than generalization in the H-IE direction, but we would rather not jump to far-reaching conclusions as this phenomenon - the enrichment of reporting verbs - could be the result of a deliberate fight on the part

of the old generation of Hungarian translators against the impoverishment of the Hungarian language under the influence of IE languages.

4. Distribution of meaning and explicitation

The next operation, to be discussed from the point of view of explicitation, is the **distribution of meaning**. Distribution of meaning is a lexical operation whereby the meaning of a SL unit is rendered by two or more TL units. In the case of distribution - the meaning of the SL word falls apart, the components of meaning being distributed among two or more TL words. The main types of the distribution of meaning in Hungarian → Indo-European translation are the following: (1) distribution of inchoative verbs in H→IE translation, (2) distribution of adverbs of manner in H→IE translation, (3) distribution of reporting verbs in H→IE translation, (4) distribution of semantically rich verbs in H→IE translation, (5) distribution of kinship terms in both directions, (6) distribution of culture-specific words in both directions.

Explicitation strategies will be illustrated by one type of distribution of meaning, that is, the distribution of semantically rich verbs in H-IE translation. Semantically rich Hungarian verbs are very often rendered by an IE verb of general meaning (E: *take, make, do* G: *machen, commen, tun* F: *faire, prendre,*

avoir, R: *prinimat'*, *proizvodit'*, *vzyat'*) and one or two nouns of specific meaning.

- (9) Mikor a gróf felébredt, *kikocsizott*, ha ugyan Estella megengedte.
- (10) When the count awoke *he went out for a drive in his coach*, if Estella allowed him to. Hungarian: *kikocsizott* → English: *he went for a drive in his coach*.
- (11) Ott az osztály végén parasztgyermekek *tanyáztak*.
- (12) Hier, am Ende der Klasse, hatten die Bauernjungs ihr *Lager aufgeschlagen*. Hungarian: *tanyáztak* → German: *Lager aufgeschlagen* (lit: 'take shelter')
- (13) *ők is cihelődtek*.
- (14) Elles aussi *rassemblaient leurs affaires*. Hungarian: *cihelődtek* → French: *rassemblaient leurs affaires*. (lit: 'prepare to leave')
- (15) Nagy csöndben voltak, egyikük sem *pisszent*.
- (16) Vsyo eto delalos' v glubokom molchanii: nikto ne *izdval ni zvuka*. Hungarian: *pisszen* → Russian: *izdaval zvuk* (lit: 'making a slight sound')

As we can see from the above examples, the meaning of semantically rich

Hungarian verbs falls apart, the components of meaning are distributed among several words: an IE verb of general meaning and one or two IE nouns of more or less specific meaning. In these examples explicitation simply means the use of more words in the translation than in the original. These explicitations are more or less obligatory explicitations; in most cases there is no other choice for the translator but distribution. The reason for this is to be found in the synthetic character of the Hungarian and the analytic character of the Indo-European languages. Because of its synthetic character, Hungarian can append many more types of prefixes and suffixes to words than what is possible in IE languages. Due to a rich storehouse of prefixes and suffixes that can be appended to Hungarian verbs, they can carry meanings for the expression of which English, German, French and Russian need several words. As mentioned above, the translation has more words, but the same amount of meaning.

As for the above mentioned explicitation/implication reciprocity, there is a very interesting phenomenon to be observed. While the distribution of the meaning is obligatory in the relation of H-IE, the opposite operation,— that is the integration of the meaning — , is not obligatory in the direction IE-H. Lazy translators do not even try to find the synthetic Hungarian verb to be used and under the influence of analytic IE forms they apply analytic (verb plus noun)

forms in their Hungarian translation. Therefore the distribution of meaning often takes place in both directions, resulting in a more explicit text in both languages.

5. Grammatical specification and explicitation

Finally, we will discuss one of the grammatical operations, that is a grammatical specification, taking place as a consequence of so called "missing categories". For instance there is gender distinction in English, German French and Russian but not in Hungarian. There are articles in English, German, French and Hungarian but not in Russian; there are objective conjugations in Hungarian but not in English, German, French and Russian and so on. Missing categories of the SL should be replaced in the TL.

The subtype of grammatical specification chosen for illustration, is the specification of personal pronouns in IE-H translation. As there is no gender distinction in Hungarian, the Hungarian personal pronouns can not fulfill the task of identification of characters. In the place of IE personal pronouns we find common names, proper names, nicknames etc in the Hungarian text.

(17) 'I know your father is waiting for me with open arms,' *she* said,

(18) - Tudom, hogy apád tárt karokkal vár rám - mondta *Any*a. English:

she → Hungarian: *anya* (lit: 'mother')

- (19) Mrs. Morel, very tired, and sick of his babble, went to bed as quickly as possible, while *he* raked the fire.
- (20) Az asszony fáradt is volt már, unta is a locsogását; amint tehetett, sietett lefeküdni, amíg *az ura* megrakta a tüzet. English: *he* → Hungarian: *ura* (lit: 'her husband')
- (21) *Er* begegnet *ihr*, wie *sie* es verlangt hat; *sie* begegnet ihm, wie *sie* es vorausgesagt hat.
- (22) A *fiatalember* úgy viselkedik, ahogy a *leány* kérte; amaz pedig úgy, ahogy előre megmondta. German: *er, sie* → Hungarian: *fiatalember, lány* (lit: 'young man, girl')
- (23) *Sie* mochte etwa so alt sein wie *er*, nämlich ein wenig jenseits der Dreißig.
- (24) *Lizaveta* körülbelül egyidős volt *Tonióval*, vagyis valamivel túl a harmincon. German: *sie, er* → Hungarian: *Lizaveta, Tonio*
- (25) – Car enfin ..., reprit *elle*, vous êtes libre. *Elle* hésita: – Riche.
– Ne vous moquez pas de moi, répondit *il*.
Et *elle* jurait qu'elle ne se moquat pas, ...
- (26) – Mert végre is ... – folytatta *Emma* –, ön mégiscsak szabad ember.

Majd habozva: – És gazdag is.

– Ne csúfolódjon velem – válaszolt *Boulangier úr*.

S *Bovaryné* esküdözött, hogy egy cseppet sem csúfolódik, ... French:

elle, il → Hungarian: *Emma, Bovaryné, Boulangier úr*

(27) – Da ne *yeyo*. *Yeyo*.

(28) – De nem *a férfit*. Az *asszonyt*. Russian: *yeyo, yeyo* → Hungarian:

férfit, asszony (lit: man, women)

This type of explicitation does not result in more words in the translation. Explicitation takes place by the use of more specific names instead of personal pronouns. The replacement of personal pronouns by the names of the characters is not an obligatory operation because a certain degree of uncertainty can be tolerated by Hungarian readers, and on the basis of the whole text they generally know who the story is about. Nevertheless, Hungarian translators generally carry out this specification what is the manifestation of Hungarian translation-norms, though this time I do not want to go further into the question of norms. The source of the additional information is partly the interpretation of the textual situation (we know the age of the persons in a novel or a story), partly our knowledge of the world (we know what can be a culturally accepted denomination of a shop

assistant for instance).

As for explicitation/implication reciprocity, there is again a kind of asymmetry between the two directions. The opposite operation, that is the generalization of proper names in IE-Hungarian translation does not necessarily take place.

6. Conclusions

On the basis of the analysis of the three operations discussed above, explicitation does not necessarily result in the increase of the number of words in a translation. The reasons for explicitation can be very different, from language-system differences to differences in the literary traditions or norms. The source of additional information can equally be contained in the text itself, or in a textual situation, or may be drawn from an outside source: that is, our overall knowledge of the world at large. As for the balance between explicitation and implication strategies we can observe an interesting asymmetry in the case of certain operations. Explicitation in one direction is not necessarily counterbalanced by implications in the other direction.

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