

Klaudy, K. 1993. On Explication Hypothesis. In: Kohn J., Klaudy K. et al. (eds) *Transfere necesse est... Current Issues of Translation Theory. In honour of György Radó on his 80th birthday*. Szombathely: Dániel Berzsenyi College. 69-77.

ON EXPLICATION HYPOTHESIS

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There is a generally accepted view that translations are always longer than the originals.

This statement is one of those intuitive reflections on translation, which are shared not only by the "man in the street" but also by professional translators.

To justify or reject these intuitive reflections on translation is one of the most challenging tasks for translation theory. It was Shosana Blum-Kulka, who gave the first systematic look at this phenomenon introducing the term "explication hypothesis" in 1986, and her ideas have been reflected by several scholars in the following years.

In the first part of my paper I will give a short survey of various reflections on "explication hypothesis". In the second part on the basis of my empirical research I will try to give a typology of different kinds of additions I have found in the translations from Russian and English into Hungarian and vice versa. Finally, I would like to evaluate some issues of the hypothesis in the light of my three-language empirical research.

1. The history of the explication hypothesis

Let us begin with the history, which is not a very long one. The phrase "explication hypothesis", as I have already mentioned, was introduced by Shosana Blum-Kulka in the volume "Interlingual and Intercultural Communication" published in 1986. Examining the shifts of cohesion and coherence in translation the author suggests that shifts on the level of cohesion may change the general level of target text's textual explicitness.

The process of interpretation performed by the translator on the source text might lead to a TL text, which is more redundant than SL text. This redundancy can be expressed by a rise in the level of cohesive explicitness in the TL text. This argument may be stated as "the explication hypothesis", which postulates an observed cohesive explicitness from SL to TL texts regardless of the increase traceable to differences between the two linguistic and textual systems involved. It follows that explication is viewed here as inherent in the process of translation. (Blum-Kulka 1986: 19)

Two years later Candace Seguinot in her article "Pragmatics and the Explication Hypothesis" makes some critical remarks to Blum-Kulka's article. Firstly, she finds the definition too narrow: "explicitness does not necessarily mean redundancy". Secondly, she points out, that "the greater number of words in French translation, for example, can be explained by well-documented differences in the stylistics of English and French." (Seguinot 1988:108) The term "explication" she would like to reserve for additions which can not be explained by structural, stylistic or rhetorical differences between the two languages.

She looked at translations from English into French and from French into English, and in both cases she has found greater explicitness in translation, which was the result of (1) improved

topic-comment links, (2) addition of linking words, (3) raising subordinate information into coordinate. The greater explicitness in both cases - according to her research - could be explained not by structural or stylistic differences between the two languages but by the editing strategies of the revisers. My problem is, that I can not imagine what else the revisers could be governed by in their editing strategies, if not by the intuitively recognized stylistic or rhetorical differences between the two languages.

One year later, in 1989 a Finnish researcher, Inkeri Vehmas-Lehto brings up the issue of explicitation in her book on quasi-correctness of Finnish journalistic texts translated from Russian. Examining the frequency of connective elements in the translated Finnish texts in comparison with the authentic Finnish texts she argues: "...considering the many inevitable losses

in cohesion which take place in the process of translation, one might ask whether the Finnish translations would be much worse even if they contained more connectives than the authentic Finnish texts." (Vehmas-Lehto 1989: 204)

As we can see the author points out the greater explicitness of Finnish translation in comparison not with the Russian original but the authentic Finnish texts, thus she suggests an entirely new question: whether the translations are always more explicit than authentic target language texts of the same register?

If this would be the case, the higher degree of explicitness in translated texts could be explained by one of the most general features of all translations, which is totally independent from language combination or direction of translation: by the necessity to formulate ideas on the target language, that were originally conceived in the source language, that is by the difficulties on the way from thought to language form, if there is an other language form in between.

Finishing the overview of the development of the explicitation hypothesis I would like to return to one particular issue of Blum-Kulka's article: she points out the necessity of large scale contrastive studies in different languages and language combinations to establish the validity of explicitation hypothesis.

I think that Hungarian-English and Hungarian-Russian language combinations are interesting enough to provide evidence for the hypothesis. As Hungarian does not belong to the standard European languages, and being a Finno-Ugric language its system is clearly different from European languages, it would be interesting to see, how this hypothesis works or does not work in these combinations.

2. Typology of additions

In the second part of my paper I would like to give a typology of additions to the target language text on the basis of my empirical research carried out first on academic texts translated from Russian into Hungarian, then on literary texts translated from Russian and English into Hungarian and vice versa.

As I will speak only about the additions, it should be mentioned, that addition is not the only device of explicitation. Addition is one of the three main devices, listed by Seguinot:

- (1) something is expressed in TT, which was not expressed in ST,
- (2) something is overtly expressed in TT, which was only understood in ST,
- (3) something is given a greater importance in TT, as was in ST.

In this article I will not discuss the second and the third device, that is the semantic explicitation and the explicitation through emphasis, only the simplest additions, when we find something in the translation, what was not found in the original.

2.1. Obligatory additions

The first type of additions found in our corpus, we call "obligatory" additions, since if we do not carry out these additions, we will not have grammatically correct target language sentences. These additions are dictated by the structural differences between languages. The most obvious cases of obligatory additions are caused by the so called "missing categories". As there is no definite article in Russian, and there is in Hungarian and English, all translation from Russian into English and Hungarian will contain a lot of pluses for this very simple reason. As there are no prepositions in Hungarian, but there are in Russian and English, all translations from Hungarian into English and Russian will contain a lot of pluses also for this very simple reason.

The next obvious reason for obligatory additions is the analytic or synthetic character of languages. Hungarian is a dominantly synthetic language: Hungarian nouns have no prepositions but they have long inflected case endings, which include the function of prepositions, possessive pronouns etc. (*kertemben* = one word in Hungarian, *in my garden*, *v moyem sadu* = three words in English and Russian). Hungarian verbs also have very complex conjugations, the personal pronoun, the accusative ending and sometimes the auxiliary verb are all included in the Hungarian verb form (*szeretlek* = one word in Hungarian, *I love you*, *ya lyublyu tebya* = three words in English and Russian). As English and Russian are dominantly analytic languages all Hungarian noun and verb forms are divided in the process of Hungarian-English and Hungarian-Russian translation, and the target text will contain a lot of pluses for this reason.

It has been already mentioned, that these obligatory additions dictated by the structural differences between the languages are not regarded explicitations. This is the first point I would like to argue with in the following parts of my paper.

2.2. Optional additions

The next type of additions have in our corpus, we shall call "optional" additions. We call them optional because if we do not carry them out, the sentences of the target text may be grammatically correct sentences, but the text as a whole will be clumsy and unnatural. Optional additions are necessary not for the correct sentence but for the correct text.

Optional additions are for example addition of connective elements for the improvement of the cohesion links at the beginning of sentences or clauses, or the addition of emphasizees for improving topic-comment relations in the middle of the sentences etc.

In our three-language corpus we can find plus conjunctions in almost every Hungarian sentence translated from Russian and English, because lengthy Russian and English nominal, adverbial and participial phrases are generally translated into Hungarian by relative clauses. As the frequency of non-finite verb phrases in Hungarian texts is relatively low, English and Russian non finite verb phrases are generally translated into Hungarian as finite verb phrases, which means a new finite clause with new conjunctions. We call this type of addition optional, because lengthy nominal, adverbial and participial phrases can be constructed in Hungarian too - in principle - but they are rarely used in practice

Raising the subordinate information of Russian and English sentences into coordinate

information of Hungarian sentences by addition of conjunctions makes the Hungarian text longer and more explicit. This type of explicitation works only in Russian-Hungarian and English-Hungarian directions and does not work vice versa. When we translate from Hungarian into Russian and English we should drop the conjunctions, and the Hungarian finite clauses should be translated into English and Russian as non finite clauses. And - what is very interesting - the omission of conjunctions does not ruin the cohesion of Russian and English texts. Just the other way round. While the cohesion in Hungarian is expressed by conjunctions and finite clauses, in Russian and English by non finite clauses, that is by fewer words than in Hungarian.

One would think that these additions can be regarded real explicitations, but as they can be explained by the textual differences between languages and work only in one direction, they are also excluded from the category of explicitation. As we have already mentioned Candace Seginot in her article would like to reserve the term "explicitation" for additions which can be explained not by the differences between languages but by the nature of the translation process itself, and can thus work in both direction.

This is the second point I will dispute. As my three-language corpus testifies, all additions, mentioned in her article as "real" explicitations for instance: improved topic-comment relations, addition of linking words, raising subordinate information into coordinate can be very well explained by differences in the text building strategies or stylistic preferences of the three languages.

2.3 Pragmatic additions

There is only one type of addition which is really derived from the nature of the translation process itself. Additions necessary in the translation of so called "culturally bound lexemes". I call them "pragmatic" additions.

Pragmatic additions can be explained by differences between two cultures, between generally shared knowledge of the members of different cultural communities. Recognizing, that the target language audience does not share the same historical, geographic and cultural knowledge as the source language audience translators often have to give explanatory translation. For the target language audience the simple mentioning of the name of a village, river, food or drink characteristic for the source language community does not mean anything. The name may be well known for everybody in the source language community, but totally unknown for the target language audience. In this case instead of *Maros* the translator should write *river Maros*, *reka Maros*, instead of *Fertő* - *lake Fertő*, *ozero Fertő*.

Pragmatic additions can be indeed derived from the nature of the translation process, which is a kind of communication not only between languages but also between cultures, this however does not influence the number of words in translation in a statistically significant measurable way. First because addition is not the only way of explanation, secondly because if the culturally bound lexeme is not very important for the general message of the text, it can be simply omitted.

2.5. Conclusions

Reviewing the differed kinds of additions to the target text in our corpus, the first question to be answered is the following: shall we call all additions explicitation or only some of them? According to some scholars obligatory additions are not very interesting for the

explicitation hypothesis. One reason for this is, that they are obligatory indeed, if we do not carry them out, we will not get a grammatically correct sentence. The second reason for this is, that they are carried out automatically even by less experienced translators.

Why do I believe that they are worth mentioning nevertheless? Because independently of their obligatory and automatic character translated texts will be - in this aspect - more explicit indeed than the original. Analytic noun and verb phrases, beside their inherent explicitness, will influence also the general explicitness of the text. In literary translation for instance, especially in the translation of poetry the consequences of this obligatory – non always desirable – explicitation should be counterbalanced by other operations.

The second type of additions, so called optional additions, which are dictated not by the structural but by the textual and rethorical differences between the two languages, and which therefore work only in one direction, are also excluded from the explicitation devices by Seguinot but accepted by Blum-Kulka. The status of these textually based optional additions from the point of view of explicitation is really complicated. Some of them can be very well explained by textlinguistics, some of them can be really regarded as part of the editing strategies, the purpose of which is to help the reader in understanding the text of the translation. I am convinced, that textually based optional additions are very important for the explicitation hypothesis, and excluding them, we lose a very fruitful field of research.

The third type of additions, – we call them pragmatic – can be explained by the nature of translation process but as we have already mentioned they do not influence the number of words in translation in a statistically significant way. Another problem with pragmatic additions is, that as they reflect the endless variety of differences between contrasted worlds (and not languages) they are not very apt for systematic description, and the extreme enthusiasm for their research may only strengthen the rather undesirable anecdotic character of translation studies.

So, repeating our question, shall we call explicitation all additions in translation or only some of them, our answer could be the following. Obligatory, optional and pragmatic additions are equally interesting for the explicitation hypothesis, because they all influence the general explicitness of the target text.

But additions are inseparably intertwined with omissions. Languages can not be divided into inherently explicit or implicit languages. They can be explicit on one level and implicit on another. Hungarian for instance is implicit on phrase level (synthetic noun and verb forms), but explicit on sentence level (finite clauses). Russian and English are explicit on phrase level (analytic noun and verb forms), but implicit on sentence level (non finite clauses). Therefore, additions on one level will go together with omissions on another level. We may say that there is a permanent battle in translation between additions and omissions on the sentence level, and the result of this battle can be measured only on the text level.

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