date in Toury’s (1980a; 1995) work. Whereas other theorists might ask whether two texts are equivalent according to some predefined, prescriptive criterion of equivalence, Toury treats the existence of equivalence between TTs and STs as a given. This equivalence postulate (1980a: 113) then allows him to state that ‘the question to be asked in the actual study of translations (especially in the comparative analysis of TT and ST) is not whether the two texts are equivalent (from a certain aspect), but what type and degree of translation equivalence they reveal’ (1980a: 47). Toury’s approach, and subsequently Koller’s (1995: 196), makes appeal to a historical, relative notion of equivalence. ‘Rather than being a single relationship, denoting a recurring type of invariant, it comes to refer to any relation which is found to have characterized translation under a specified set of circumstances’ (Toury 1995: 61). The norms that determine the particular concept of equivalence prevalent at different stages in history, or amongst different schools of translators, or even within the work of a single translator, then constitute a valid object of enquiry for descriptive translation studies.

Toury’s equivalence postulate, as well as his broad definition of a translation as whatever is regarded as a translation in the target culture (1980a; 1995), allow him to broaden the scope of translation studies to investigate previously marginalized phenomena. Thus equivalence-based translation theories can escape the censure of other schools of thought, where it is widely held that equivalence implies a prescriptive, non-inclusive approach to translation. There are, however, objections to what is viewed as too wide a notion of equivalence: Snell-Hornby (1988: 21) suggests that the notion of equivalence in the English-speaking world has become so vague as to be useless; while Pym (1992a, 1995), Neubert (1994) and Koller (1995) would like to see a more restrictive view of equivalence reinstated, not least because a more constrained view of equivalence allows translation to be distinguished from non-translation. Pym (1995: 166) quotes Stecconi (forthcoming) to support this point: ‘Equivalence is crucial to translation because it is the unique intertextual relation that only translations, among all conceivable text types, are expected to show’.

See also:
LINGUISTIC APPROACHES; SHIFTS OF TRANSLATION; UNIT OF TRANSLATION.

Further reading

DOROTHY KENNY

Explicitation

Explicitation is the technique of making explicit in the target text information that is implicit in the source text. Explicitation (implication) strategies are generally discussed together with addition (omission) strategies (Vinay and Darbelnet 1958). Some scholars regard addition as the more generic and explicitation as the more specific concept (Nida 1964), while others interpret explicitation as the broader concept which incorporates the more specific concept of addition (Séguinot 1988, Schjoldager 1995). The two are handled as synonyms by Englund Dimitrova, who uses the terms ‘addition-explicitation’ and ‘omission-implicitation’ (Englund Dimitrova 1993).

Defining explicitation

The concept of explicitation was first introduced by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), in whose glossary of translation techniques explicitation is defined as ‘the process of introducing information into the target language which is present only implicitly in the source language, but which can be derived from the context or the situation’ (1958: 8; translated). Implicitation is defined as ‘the process of allowing the target language situation or context to define certain details which were explicit in the source language’ (ibid.: 10). The results of explicitation and implicitation are often discussed in terms of gains and losses; for example, because the Hungarian pronoun system is not marked for gender, part of the meaning of the English personal pronoun she is lost in translation into Hungarian.

The concepts of explicitation and implicitation have been further developed by Nida
(1964), who, however, does not actually use the terms ‘explicitation’ and ‘implicitation’. Nida deals with the main techniques of adjustment used in the process of translating, namely additions, subtractions and alterations. **Additions** are of the following types:

(a) filling out elliptical expressions
(b) obligatory specification
(c) additions required because of grammatical restructuring
(d) amplification from implicit to explicit status
(e) answers to rhetorical questions
(f) classifiers
(g) connectives
(h) categories of the receptor language which do not exist in the source language
(i) doublets (1964: 227)

**Amplification** from implicit to explicit status ((d) above) takes place when ‘important semantic elements carried implicitly in the source language may require explicit identification in the receptor language’ (ibid.: 228). Nida lists several examples from **Bible translation** to illustrate the range and variety of this type of addition. For example “queen of the South” (Luke 11: 31) can be very misleading when neither “queen” nor “South” is familiar in the receptor language ... Accordingly in Tarascan one must say “woman who was ruling in the south country”” (ibid.: 229). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, most publications on partial translation theories, especially in the field of language-restricted, area-restricted and culture-restricted theories (Holmes 1972a; see **translation studies**), followed Nida’s example: explicitation and implication were seen as only two among a variety of methods for addition and omission in translation.

For example, Barkhudarov (1975: 223) identifies four types of transformation in translation: **perestanovka** (‘transposition’), **zamena** (‘substitution’), **dobaviennye** (‘addition’), and **opushcheniye** (‘omission’). In his opinion, the most important reason for addition in translation from English into Russian is ellipsis in nominal structures in English, that is, the omission of certain semantic components in English surface structure which were present in the deep structure.

As ellipsis is not characteristic of Russian, the omitted semantic components are reconstructed in the Russian surface structure: **pay claim** thus becomes **trebovaniiye povisit zarplata** (‘demand to raise the pay’) and **gun licence** becomes **udostovereniye na pravo nosheniya oruzhiya** (‘licence for right to carry weapon’).

A very detailed typology of lexical and grammatical transformations, including grammatical additions in Bulgarian–Russian and Russian–Bulgarian translation, can be found in the work of the Bulgarian scholar Vaseva (1980). In Vaseva’s view, additions are generated when ‘linguistic asymmetry’ necessitates explicit expression in the target language of meaning components that are contained implicitly in the source language. She explains grammatical additions with reference to so-called ‘missing categories’ and categories with different functions: Bulgarian has articles, while Russian has none; the possessive pronoun and the copula can be omitted in Russian, but not in Bulgarian; the direct object can in certain rare cases be omitted in Russian, but never in Bulgarian. Besides grammatical additions, Vaseva refers briefly to so-called pragmatic additions, which are made when concepts generally known by the source language audience may be unfamiliar to the target language audience and therefore require explanation in translation.

Neither Barkhudarov nor Vaseva uses the term ‘explicitation’ itself, though Komissarov (1969) employs the Russian equivalent, **eksplisirovaniye**. This term, and the associated **implisirovaniye** (‘implicitation’), became widely used in Russian studies within the text-linguistic approach to translation (Kukharenko 1988, Chernov 1988, Gak 1988).

**The explicitation hypothesis**

The so-called **explicitation hypothesis** was formulated by Blum-Kulka (1986) in what is considered by many to be the first systematic study of explicitation. Drawing on concepts and descriptive terms developed within discourse analysis, she explores discourse level explicitation, that is, explicitation connected with shifts of cohesion and coherence (overt and covert textual markers) in translation.
Shifts of cohesive markers can be partly attributed to the different grammatical systems of languages. For instance, in English–French translation gender specification may make the French text more explicit than the English. Other shifts in the use of cohesive markers are attributable to different stylistic preferences for certain types of cohesive markers in different languages. For example, in English–Hebrew translation preference for lexical repetition rather than pronominalization may make the Hebrew text more explicit (1986: 19). However, according to the explicitation hypothesis, it is the process of translation itself, rather than any specific differences between particular languages, which bears the major part of the responsibility for explicitation (ibid.).

The process of interpretation performed by the translator on the source text might lead to a TL text which is more redundant than the 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 explicitation 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 explicitation is viewed here as inherent in the process of translation.

According to Séguinot (1988), however, this definition is too narrow: ‘explicitness does not necessarily mean redundancy’ (108). 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’ (ibid.). In her view, the term ‘explicitation’ should be reserved for additions which cannot be explained by structural, stylistic or rhetorical differences between the two languages, and addition is not the only device of explicitation. Explicitation takes place not only when ‘something is expressed in the translation, which was not in the original’ (ibid.), but also in cases where ‘something which was implied or understood through presupposition in the source text is overtly expressed in the translation, or an element in the source text is given a greater importance in the translation through focus, emphasis, or lexical choice’ (ibid.).

Séguinot examines translations from English into French and from French into English, and in both cases she finds greater explicitness in translation, resulting from improved topic-comment links, the addition of linking words and the raising of subordinate information into coordinate or principal structures (ibid.: 109). Her study suggests that the increase in explicitness in both cases can be explained not by structural or stylistic differences between the two languages, but by the editing strategies of text revisers.

However, support for a version of the explicitation hypothesis may be found in Vehmas-Lehto’s study (1989), which compares the frequency of connective elements in Finnish journalistic texts translated from Russian with their frequency in texts in the same genre, originally written in Finnish. She finds that the Finnish translations are more explicit than the texts originally written in Finnish. It is possible, therefore, that explicitation strategies inherent in the translation process cause translated texts in a given genre to be more explicit than texts of that genre originally composed in the target language for the translations.

In the 1990s, explicitation research gained a new impetus from experimental studies of consecutive and simultaneous interpreting, which suggest that time pressure may make implicating strategies (compression, condensation) more important in interpreting than explicitation strategies (Englund Dimitrova, forthcoming; Schjoldager 1995). Another application of the concept is to be found in Hewson and Martin’s study of DRAMA TRANSLATION, which suggests that implicating/explicating techniques shift ‘certain elements from the linguistic to the situational level and vice versa’ (1991: 104). In drama translation, ‘meaningful elements are transferred from situation into the staging text (stage directions) or integrated into the characters’ words’ (ibid.).

Types of explicitation

Obligatory explicitation

Obligatory explicitation is dictated by differences in the syntactic and semantic structure of
languages (Barkhudarov 1975; Vaseva 1980; Klaudy 1993, 1994; Englund Dimitrova 1993). Syntactic and semantic explicitations are obligatory because without them target-language sentences would be ungrammatical.

The most obvious cases of obligatory explicitation are caused by the so-called ‘missing categories’. For example, there is no definite article in Russian, so translation from Russian into English, which uses its definite article prolifically, will involve numerous additions, as will translation from the preposition-free Hungarian into languages such as Russian and English, which use prepositions.

An almost equally potent source of obligatory additions in translation is language typology, particularly where translation between an analytic and a synthetic language is concerned. In a predominantly synthetic language such as Hungarian, the functions performed in predominantly analytic languages by prepositions, possessive pronouns, etc., are carried by long, inflected case endings. For example, the phrase ‘in my garden’ is rendered by the single word kertemben. 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; so the Russian ya lyublyu tebya (‘I love you’) becomes the single Hungarian word szeretlek. Since English and Russian are predominantly analytic languages, all Hungarian noun and verb forms are decomposed in the process of Hungarian–English and Hungarian–Russian translation, and the target text will contain many additions (cf. the concept of ‘inherently-explicit’ and ‘inherently-implicit’ languages in Séguinot 1988; Klaudy 1993).

While such syntactic explicitation generally means an increase in the number of separate words in the target text, semantic explicitation consists of choosing more specific words in the target text. Due to the different linguistic structuring of reality in different languages, certain concepts such as body-parts, colours and kinship terms may have more detailed vocabularies in some languages than in others. For example, the English terms ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ cannot be translated into Hungarian without explicitation, because Hungarian has different terms for ‘younger brother’ (ős) and ‘younger sister’ (hug), and for ‘older brother’ (báty) and ‘older sister’ (n vér).

Optional explicitations
Optional explicitations are dictated by differences in text-building strategies (cf. Blum-Kulka’s cohesive patterns) and stylistic preferences between languages. They are optional in the sense that grammatically correct sentences can be constructed without their application in the target language, although the text as a whole will be clumsy and unnatural. Examples of optional explicitations include sentence or clause initial addition of connective elements to strengthen cohesive links, the use of relative clauses instead of long, left branching nominal constructions, and the addition of emphizers for the clarification of sentence perspective, among others (Doherty 1987; Vehmas-Lehto 1989).

Pragmatic explicitations
Pragmatic explicitations of implicit cultural information (Pym 1993) are dictated by differences between cultures: members of the target language cultural community may not share aspects of what is considered general knowledge within the source language culture and, in such cases, translators often need to include explanations in translations. For example, names of villages and rivers, or of items of food and drink which are well known to the source language community may mean nothing to the target language audience. In such cases, a translator might for instance write ‘the river Maros’ for Maros, or ‘Lake Fertő’ for Fertő.

Translation-inherent explicitations
Translation-inherent explicitations can be attributed to the nature of the translation process itself. Séguinot draws a distinction between ‘choices that can be accounted for in the language system, and choices that come about because of the nature of the translation process’ (1988: 18). The latter type of explicitation is explained by one of the most pervasive, language-independent features of all translational activity, namely the necessity to formulate ideas in the target language that were originally conceived in the source language (Klaudy 1993).
The validity of the explicitation hypothesis

The concept of translation-inherent explicitation is related to the explicitation hypothesis, according to which translations are always longer than the originals, regardless of the languages, genres and registers concerned (Blum-Kulka 1986; Séguinot 1988). Though explicitations and implicitations, or additions and omissions, are inseparably intertwined in the process of translation, the tendency towards explicitation is always stronger than the tendency towards implicitation. This hypothesis can be tested by large-scale empirical studies of the interlanguages produced by various groups, from language learners to non-professional and professional translators (Blum-Kulka 1988: 19; Toury 1991b), and by introspective data from investigations of the translation process (Krings 1986; Lörscher 1991b). Crucial quantitative evidence can be expected from the use of computerized corpora, especially parallel and comparable corpora (Baker 1993, 1995, 1997).

See also:
CORPORA IN TRANSLATION STUDIES; SHIFTS OF TRANSLATION; UNIVERSALS OF TRANSLATION.

Further reading

KINGA KLAUDY