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Culture in Translation: Strategies and Operations

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This paper, by analysing Judith Sollosy's English translation of Péter Esterházy's *Hrabal könyve* (see Sources), aims to show what happens to culturally embedded expressions in the process of translation, to systematise and, within the frames of relevance theory, to explain the phenomena in question. It is suggested that in translating such expressions translators have four basic operations at their disposal: transference, translation proper, substitution and modification, which are defined here and explained in relevance-theoretic terms. The analysis is based on the assumption that translation is a special form of communication, aimed at establishing interpretive resemblance between the source text and the target text, governed by the principle of optimal resemblance (Sperber and Wilson 1986, and Gutt 1991). The findings suggest that considerations of how the semantic content of such expressions may be preserved in the target communication situation depend heavily not only on what overall strategy the translator chooses to adopt for the given translation but also on whether it can be done in a cost-effective way, in consistency with the principle of relevance.

1. Introduction

In some previous papers (see, for instance, Vermes 2003) I have shown that, since proper names, beyond their referential (identifying) function, often carry some semantic content, the translation of proper names is not a trivial issue but, on the contrary, a delicate decision-making process. I found that proper names are not simply transferred but may as well be translated, modified, or substituted by a conventional TL correspondent. These findings were easily explained on the basis of the assumption that translation is a communicative process, governed by the principle of optimal resemblance (Gutt 1991). It then seems an obvious move to suppose that the descriptive and explicatory apparatus will be applicable to an even wider range of culture-specific expressions, traditionally referred to as cultural realia, and this is what the present study will explore. In particular, it aims to answer two questions. (1) How is the translator's strategy manifested in the operations which are actually selected to tackle culture-specific expressions? (2) How can we explain the choice of a particular operation in a particular context?

One basic assumption is that translation is a form of ostensive-inferential communication, as explicated in Sperber and Wilson (1986) and Gutt (1991). A brief outline of relevance theory is presented in Section 2.1, followed by, in the next section, a discussion of translation as a form of interpretation and of the context of translation. Section 2.3 will clarify what I mean by the terms 'culture' and 'culture-specific expression'. Section 3, in turn, introduces, along with a short explanation of translation strategies, the translation operations, which will be discussed through examples in Section 4.

2. Background

2.1. Ostensive-Inferential Communication, Relevance and Meaning

The terms ostensive and inferential describe two complementary aspects of communication. It is an ostensive process because it involves communicators in producing a stimulus that points toward their intentions, and inferential because the audience uses the stimulus in an inferential process of comprehension as evidence for what those intentions may be.

Any individual will only pay attention to a stimulus when they can expect that it will prove relevant to them. Thus, when communicators produce a stimulus with the intention to convey a certain set of assumptions, they will have to, in a way, implicitly promise the audience that, on the one hand, the stimulus will lead to the desired effects and, on the other, it will not take more effort than is necessary for achieving these effects. This requirement is at the heart of ostensive-inferential communication and is called the principle of **relevance**: "Every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance" (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 158), where optimal relevance means that the processing of a stimulus leads to **contextual effects** that are worth the audience's attention and, moreover, that it puts the audience to no unnecessary **processing effort** in achieving those effects.

A contextual effect arises when, in the given context, the new information strengthens or replaces an existing assumption or when, combining with an assumption in the context, it results in a contextual implication. The effort required to process a stimulus in a context is the function of several factors. According to Wilson (1992: 174), the three most important of these are: the complexity of the stimulus, the accessibility of the context, and the inferential effort needed to compute the contextual effects of the stimulus in that context.

In relevance theory, an assumption is defined as a structured set of concepts. In this framework the meaning of a concept is made up of a

truth-functional **logical entry**, which may be empty, partially filled or fully definitional, and an **encyclopaedic entry**, containing various kinds of (propositional and non-propositional) representational information about the extension and the possible connotations of the concept (e.g. cultural or personal beliefs), stored in memory. The concept may also be associated with a lexical entry, which contains linguistic (phonological, morphological, semantic and categorial) information about the natural language item related to it (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 83–93). The three different types of information (lexical, logical and encyclopaedic) are stored in different places in memory.

It is suggested that the content of an assumption is the function of the logical entries of the concepts that it contains and the context in which it is processed is, at least partly, drawn from the encyclopaedic entries of these concepts (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 89).

2.2. Context and Translation

Utterance interpretation is an inferential process whereby the audience infers, by combining the stimulus with a set of contextual assumptions (**context** in the narrow sense), the intended meaning of the communicator. For this to happen, the audience must use the context envisaged by the communicator, otherwise the stimulus may be misinterpreted and the communication may fail. Let us call the situation when this condition is fulfilled a **primary communication situation**, and the second where the audience uses a more or less different set of contextual assumptions a **secondary communication situation** (Gutt 1991: 73). A secondary communication situation is likely to occur when the communicator and the audience are representatives of different socio-cultural contexts (**context** in the wider sense), that is, when there is a marked difference between their background assumptions and circumstances, which constitute, roughly, the **cognitive environment** of an individual (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 39).

Interpretive resemblance between utterances (or any representation with a propositional form) means that the two representations share at least a subset of their analytic and contextual implications (their **explicatures** and **implicatures**) in a context (Wilson and Sperber 1988: 138). Translation can then be seen as the act of communicating in the secondary context an informative intention that interpretively resembles the original one as closely as possible under the given conditions. Thus the principle of relevance in translation becomes a presumption of **optimal resemblance**: the translation is "(a) presumed to interpretively resemble the original [...] and (b) the resemblance it shows is to be consistent with

the presumption of optimal relevance" (Gutt 1991: 101). In other words: the translation should resemble the original in such a way that it provides adequate contextual effects and it should be formulated in such a manner that the intended interpretation can be recovered by the audience without undue processing effort.

Apparently, in intercultural situations it is very rare that the original context (in the narrow sense) should be available in the target culture. It is possible perhaps in circumstances where different language communities have shared the same geographical, political, and economic environment for a long enough time to eliminate major cultural differences but in most cases the secondary communication situation will be substantially different to exclude the possibility of complete interpretive resemblance, the ideal case which Gutt calls **direct translation**, that is, when the translation "purports to allow the recovery of the originally intended interpretation interlingually" (Gutt 1991: 163). This, then, implies that the default is not direct but **indirect translation**, which covers various grades of incomplete interpretive resemblance.

2.3. Culture and Culture-Specific Expressions

Being interested in translation as a process cutting across cultures, it seems in order to clarify here what I mean by 'culture' and 'culture-specific expressions'. Some scholars, like Pym, even use the notion of translation in defining culture: "It is enough to define the limits of a culture as the points where transferred texts have had to be (intralingually or interlingually) translated" (Pym 1992: 26). Translation can thus be seen as an indicator of the existence of cultural differences. In our present cognitive framework, these are best regarded, I think, as differences in the shared cognitive environments of groups of individuals or, rather, the **mutual cognitive environments** of groups of individuals, which means a shared cognitive environment in which it is manifest which people share it (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 41). **Culture**, then, in the wide sense, may be defined as consisting in the set of assumptions that are mutually manifest for a group of individuals and cultural differences are differences between sets of mutually manifest assumptions. What we need to pin down more precisely is the actual nature of these differences.

There will obviously be assumptions which all humans are likely to hold, due to the existence of phenomena which are universally observable, such as 'People have two legs' or 'The Sun rises in the east'. Other phenomena are not universal in this sense and will give rise to assumptions that, provided they are shared by a whole community of individuals, may be said to be

culture-specific. **Culture-specificity** thus means that an assumption which figures in the mutual cognitive environment of one community is not present in the mutual cognitive environment of another.

Trivially, any assumption about the language system of a community, and the meanings it can express, will be culture-specific and, in this sense, any expression in a language is culture-specific. However, for our present purposes it seems more useful to exclude from our objects of examination assumptions about the language system. Beyond this, any culture-specific assumption will be our concern, and any expression in a linguistic form which activates any such assumption will be relevant for us in a non-trivial sense. These are what I call **culture-specific expressions** (or culturally bound, using Duff's (1981) words).

At this point, let me briefly explain why I refrain from using the term 'cultural realia'. Klaudy (1994: 112) defines it in the following way: "it may mean an object characteristic of a linguistic community, or the very word which names this object" (my translation). The latter one is obviously an extended meaning, which may be used for ease of expression but which, in my view, also obscures the difference between language and what language may be used to express. Other authors extend the meaning of the term in another direction. Vlahov and Florin (1980: 51), for instance, distinguish three groups of cultural realia: geographical, anthropological and socio-political, including categories like geographical objects, plant and animal species, foods, drinks, clothes, occupations, tools, music, instruments, festivals, customs, nicknames, measures, administrative units, organisations, institutions, social movements, social classes, political symbols, military units and ranks etc. The list is clearly not complete, and it need not be, but it shows that the term may be understood in a very wide sense to include all possible aspects of a culture. Yet it obscures another crucial point, which is that what we are interested in is not the complete inventory of a culture but, rather, what makes a culture different from another. I think the term 'culture-specific', in the sense outlined above, highlights much better the main idea that what we are concerned with in translating from one cultural context into another is, first and foremost, the differences between these contexts. In this sense, I share the view, expressed by Valló (2000: 44), that in a given situation anything that carries some special meaning for the intended audience may become culture-specific, and the question of culture-specificity can be resolved only with regard to the relationship between two languages. Or, I would rather say, with regard to the relationship between two cognitive environments. For this reason, I do not think it is necessary to make a complete list of categories that define a culture. What is more important is that we need to be able to assess how specific assumptions in

a context contribute to the relevance of an utterance and how the possible lack of such assumptions in another context leads to the choice of a certain translation operation.

3. Translation Operations and Translation Strategies

For the purposes of description, the various treatments that culture-specific expressions are subject to in the process of translation are categorised here into four **translation operations**, which are defined by the four possible configurations in which the logical and encyclopaedic meanings of an expression may be conveyed in translation. These configurations can be illustrated in the following way: (1) [+L, +E], (2) [+L, −E], (3) [−L, +E] and (4) [−L, −E], where L stands for logical meaning and E, for encyclopaedic meaning.

(1) **Transference**, as Newmark (1988: 81) puts it, is "the process of transferring a SL word to a TL text as a translation procedure". This is essentially the same as Catford's definition: "an operation in which the TL text, or, rather, parts of the TL text, do have *values set up in the SL*: in other words, have *SL meanings*" (Catford 1965: 43, italics as in original). In simple words, this is when we decide to incorporate the SL expression unchanged into the TL text; either because it only contributes its referent to the meaning of the utterance, or because this makes possible the recovery in the target text of some assumptions, even though at the cost of an increased level of processing effort, which would not otherwise be accessible in the target cultural context.

(2) **Translation**, in the proper sense, will mean the process of using a 'dictionary equivalent' of the original. In relevance-theoretic terms this means rendering the SL expression by a TL expression which, preserving the logical content of the original, gives rise to the same relevant analytic implications in the target text as the original did in the source text (English *Free People* for Hungarian *Szabad Nép*, the title of a newspaper) but which, by the same token, will activate different encyclopaedic assumptions in the secondary context (since we are dealing with cases involving a lack of certain relevant assumptions).

(3) By **substitution** I will refer to those cases when the source language expression is replaced in the translation by a TL correspondent which is different in terms of logical content (or form, if it has no logical content) but carries with it the same relevant encyclopaedic assumptions as the original (English *commuter train* for Hungarian *HÉV*, acronym for 'local railways', English *for a song* for Hungarian *bagóért*, or Hungarian *Anglia* for English *England*). In a relevance-theoretic framework we could say that

an expression substituted this way, by directly activating relevant contextual assumptions in the target context, is the one that requires the least processing effort and any digression, increasing the amount of processing effort, would need to be justified by a substantial gain in contextual effects.

Substitution, in my understanding, also subsumes cases where the graphological units of the SL expression are replaced by TL graphological units, based on conventionally established correspondences (Hungarian *Moszkva* for Russian *Москва* or Hungarian *Csingacsguk* for English *Chingachgook*), where the TL form makes explicit the phonological value of the original expression. The inclusion of graphological substitution, traditionally called transliteration (cf., e.g., Catford 1965: 66), within this operation is justified, I think, by the conventional nature of the correspondence between graphological units and by the fact that its application is motivated mainly by considerations of optimising processing effort.

(4) **Modification** I understand as the process of choosing for the SL expression a TL substitute which is semantically, or conventionally, unrelated to the original. In relevance-theoretic terms this means replacing the original with a TL expression which involves a substantial alteration of the logical and encyclopaedic content of the SL expression (English *the market* for Hungarian *közért*, 'grocery shop', or English *shoe repair shop* for Hungarian *harisnyaszemfelszedő*). This operation is clearly aimed at minimising processing effort, even if it means losing some relevant assumptions and, thus, contextual effects.

We thus have a relatively simple set of four operations, which are defined generally enough, hopefully, to allow for any possible cases. Transference is an operation which preserves both the relevant logical and encyclopaedic content of the original expression, translation proper preserves the logical but not the encyclopaedic content, substitution preserves only the encyclopaedic content and, finally, modification preserves neither.

In general, the use of modification and substitution seems to be motivated mainly by considerations of processing effort, while the other two, transfer and translation, through preserving relevant assumptions, seem to occur mainly for reasons of ensuring adequate contextual effects in the target text. This is remarkably in line with Sperber and Wilson's definition, whereby an assumption is said to be relevant in a context, on the one hand, to the extent that it has adequate contextual effects in this context and, on the other hand, to the extent that the effort required to process it in this context is not unnecessarily great (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 125), insofar as both processing effort and contextual effects, the two factors to

be balanced in the interest of achieving relevance, are taken into account by our operations.

As was suggested in some of my earlier papers (see, for instance, Vermes 2003), the translator's strategy concerning the given translation task may be traced down through the regularities in the translator's use of the different operations. Basically, two **translation strategies** are distinguished in the literature as the two essential ways to relate a source text to the values of the receiving culture, commonly termed foreignising and domesticating. In Venuti's words, **domesticating** is an assimilationist approach, conforming to the dominant values of the target culture, while **foreignising** is "motivated by an impulse to preserve linguistic and cultural differences by deviating from prevailing domestic values" (Venuti 1998: 241). In this sense, a domesticating translation will typically alter, or even cancel out, assumptions which are absent from, or alien to, the target cultural context, thereby minimising the processing effort that the target reader needs to exert in interpreting the target text. On the other hand, a foreignising translation will aim at preserving such assumptions, thereby making it possible for the target reader to access the originally intended interpretation, even at the cost of a higher level of processing effort, which may, however, be counter-balanced by the increase of contextual effects. It would appear, then, that a domesticating approach will be implemented primarily through the use of modification and substitution, whereas a foreignising strategy will crucially involve the transfer and translation proper of ST expressions into the TL text.

4. The use of the operations in implementing strategies

For the purposes of the discussion, I will bring examples from Péter Esterházy's *Hrabal könyve* and Judith Sollosy's English translation of the novel (see Sources). Every culture-specific expression in the original was recorded and matched with the corresponding textual equivalent (see Catford 1965: 27) in the translation. Recurring expressions were recorded more than once only if they were treated in the translation in different ways. The various culture-specific expressions were categorised into nine classes and were then sorted out according to the operation which the translator applied to them. It has to be noted here that the categorisation is not meant to be determinate or complete; it is simply a way of organising the data, without any theoretical importance attributed to how it is actually done. The reason for this, as already alluded to above, is that I am concerned here not so much with setting up an inventory of categories for the various elements of a culture as with pointing out actual differences between cultures.

The most frequent operation is substitution with a total of 80 occasions, followed by transference with 67 occasions, translation proper with 30 occasions and, finally, modification with only 17 occasions. What seems interesting still at first sight is the relatively great number of substitutions and translations in the material and intellectual culture category, the domination of transference in the persons and the topography categories, and the excessive domination of substitutions in the situation schemas category. However, to check out what the numbers mean, we will need to look behind them and see what we can learn from the individual examples.

4.1. Transfer

The use of transfer dominates two categories, those of expressions referring to persons and topographic features. These expressions, being among the most numerous categories in the text, can be identified as the prime indicators of the cultural and physical setting of the story, and are mainly transferred (or in certain cases substituted, as will be seen later), with very few exceptions, to provide for the accessibility of the appropriate background assumptions concerning the setting of the story. In one extreme case even the common noun head of a street name is transferred (*Váci utca*), presumably because it marks one of the best-known places in Budapest and is supposed to figure as a unit in the target reader's cognitive environment. The exceptions are either simple mistakes, as with the modification of three personal names (*Bólyai*, in the translation, for *Bolyai*, *Odon Suck* for *Sück Ödön Mihály* and *Dansco* for *Dancsó*) or are due to the relevance of the logical content of the expression, as with the translation of three topographic expressions (*Inner City* for *Belváros*, or *Black Forest* for *Fekete-erdő*). Other transferred expressions can be found in the categories of administrative culture (*ÁVÓ*, discussed below), history, material and intellectual culture, social culture and units and measures, all contributing to the preservation of the original spacial, temporal and cultural setting for the story, serving thus as tools of foreignising.

4.2. Translation

Translation proper is a means of preserving the logical content of the original, in order to ensure that the translated utterance gives rise to the same analytic implications as the original. This can be the most obvious solution when the source expression activates some relevant encyclopaedic assumptions which, however, cannot be preserved in an effort-effective way. Thus, in the English version the pronoun *you* is used for both *maga* and *önök*, which share the same logical content but are loaded with different

stylistic values in terms of the formality of the relationship between speaker and listener.

In other cases the encyclopaedic content of the original expression can be regained with relatively little effort through activating some global contextual assumptions (English *community work* for Hungarian *társadalmi munka*, English *council* for Hungarian *tanács*, which roughly corresponds to 'local authority'). Similarly, in the English text we have *counter-revolution* for the original *ellenforradalom*, which is a precise translation of the logical content, and in the context gradually built up in the story it also carries the relevant encyclopaedic assumption that it refers to the events of 1956.

On the other hand, there are also cases where translation proper is used to introduce completely new concepts into the target reader's cognitive environment. This happens, for example, when Hungarian *paprikás krumpli* (a typical Hungarian dish) is rendered as *paprika-potato* in the translation.

There is another interesting example which shows that translations, when combined in delicate ways, may also serve the preservation of culturally induced implicatures through the extension of the context.

> Volt cukrászda, két konkurens (1a) kocsma, melyet mindenki a régi nevén hívott, a (2a) Serház meg a Kondász (az öreg Kondász még élt, asztala volt a sarokban, és pintenként rendelte a sört, amiről a gyakran cserélődő csaposok ritkán tudták, mennyi, *hát, fiacskám, egy* (3a) *korsó meg egy vágás!* [...]). (Esterházy, p. 10, italics as in original)
>
> There was a café of sorts and two rival (1b) taverns, which everyone called by their old names, the (2b) Beerhall and the Kondász (old man Kondász was still kicking, he had his own table in the corner and ordered beer by the pint, an unknown quantity for the succession of ever new barkeepers, *it's a* (3b) *pitcher and a dash, son!* [...]). (Sollosy, p. 4, italics as in original)

The problem here is that the Hungarian word 'ser' in (2a) *Serház*, the original of (2b), is associated with an encyclopaedic assumption to the effect that the expression is old-fashioned, it is not used any longer, and evokes the atmosphere of "the golden days" of the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy. Since in this part of the book the writer describes the layering upon each other of the past and present, this assumption definitely has some contextual importance here. However, the English word 'beer' does not carry a comparable assumption and this part of the context is thus lost in the translation. On the other hand, it has a near synonym in English, 'ale', which does contain in its encyclopaedic entry the assumption, waking images of the past, that this drink is brewed in the traditional way, as it used to be in the past, without adding hops. Moreover, the related compound

'alehouse' is further loaded with the encyclopaedic assumption that the expression is outdated, old-fashioned, and its use in the translation would thus have resulted in the closest possible interpretive resemblance with the original. Thus, while (2b) is a close enough rendering of the original in terms of logical content, part of the context is lost. However, going back to (1b), we see that the target expression, *tavern*, compared with the original expression, (1a) *kocsma*, meaning something like 'a cheap pub', gains in encyclopaedic content in just the opposite way: it activates assumptions relating to the past, whereas the original does not. Thus the translation in (1b) serves the purpose of compensating for the loss of contextual assumptions later in (2b). The same can be observed in (3b), where the English word *pitcher* also brings in encyclopaedic assumptions about long-gone days, not activated by the Hungarian original (3a) *korsó*, which simply means 'beermug'.

4.3. Substitution

When a particular expression makes reference to a concept which is not present in the target cultural context, it can sometimes be substituted by a target language expression that activates a different concept, which is, however, similar to the original in terms of relevant encyclopaedic content and, being familiar for target readers, will ensure the relevance of the whole utterance for a reasonable processing effort. The substitution may effect a partial change of logical content (English *bologna* for Hungarian *parizer*, a kind of cold meat, English *shopping bag* for Hungarian *cekker*, a kind of shopping bag,) or a complete change (English (union) *dues* for Hungarian (szakszervezeti) *bélyeg*, '(union) stamp').

The fact that substitution dominates the situation schemas category is no surprise. Situation schema expressions, in my interpretation, include phraseologies, idioms, proverbs and conventional metaphors and the like, all being characteristic ways of how members of a culture categorise the wide range of possible situations. This is obviously an area of cognition where cultures tend to be very different. Moreover, these schemas are so deeply rooted in the thinking of people and are so easily activated in the proper context that to exchange them for different ones would surely result in a great amount of extra processing effort. In these cases, it is not the logical content of the expression which carries relevant information but the encyclopaedic assumptions which are activated by the expression and for this reason, almost all examples of such expressions in the original are substituted by ones native to the English cultural context (English *simple as a pie* for Hungarian *pofonegyszerű*, 'simple as a slap'), that is, they are domesticated. In the same way, expressions activating assumptions

relating to social relations and attitudes can be substituted (English *dear* for Hungarian *fiam*, 'my son').

Also often substituted are several expressions relating to topographic objects which have their own names in the target culture (English *Danube* for Hungarian *Duna*). What is important in such cases is that the reference remains invariant, and since the reference here is determined not by the logical entry, which may be empty, but by the encyclopaedic entry, it will take less processing effort to recover the referent through an expression whose encyclopaedic content is readily accessible for the target reader.

For the same reason, substitution is prevalent with the full names of persons in the translation. In Hungarian, the order of names is family name first, first name second, and since English readers are not supposed to have access to this assumption, the reversed order is substituted in each case (English *Laci Bárány* for Hungarian *Bárány Laci*), with the constituent elements of these names transferred.

In a somewhat similar fashion, when a name in the original activates an encyclopaedic assumption which is not likely to be present in the target cultural context, the relevant assumption can be provided by the translator in the form of a substitution, combined with transference (English *former prime minister Károlyi* for Hungarian *Károlyi Mihály*, English *the poet Petőfi* for Hungarian *Petőfi*), which serves to spare the target reader from some extra processing effort.

Another such example is provided by the expression *ávó*, meaning 'state defence department', which occurs in three different renderings in the target text. The first occurrence is a substitution, combined with transference (*secret police ÁVÓ*), the second is a substitution (*secret police*), and the third a simple transfer (*ÁVÓ*). This then also suggests that although substitution is basically a means of domesticating source language expressions, it can nevertheless be used in ingenious ways to lead the readers toward the source culture by smuggling into their cognitive environments assumptions which originate in the source culture.

One further interesting example is provided by the following sentences.

> (4a) Az, ami az amerikaiaknak a blues, az a magyaroknak a *keserves* — (5a) erre a felismerésére büszke volt, ezért, és nem másért, szerette jobban a kurucokat a labancoknál. (Esterházy, p. 158, italics as in original)

> (4b) The *keserves*, or lamenting song, means for the Hungarians what the blues does for Americans. (5b) He was proud of this discovery, and for this and for no other reason did he prefer the *Kurucz* to the *Labancz*. (6) The anti-Habsburg *Kurucz* soldiers knew how to cry into their wine, not like those pro-Habsburg *Labancz*. (Sollosy, p. 139, italics as in original)

The Hungarian expressions *keserves*, *kuruc* and *labanc* are first all transferred (though it could be argued whether the last two are substitutions, rather), but then the translator, feeling a need to explicate some background assumptions, substituted the expression *lamenting song* in (4b) and added sentence (6), which does not occur in the original but makes explicit an encyclopaedic assumption implicit in (4a) and (5a). Clearly, the substitutions took place here because the assumptions that they make accessible are necessary for working out the relevance of (5a), and since the target readers do not have access to these assumptions as part of the encyclopaedic entries of *keserves*, *kuruc* and *labanc*, the translator probably thought the readers need help in order that the necessary processing effort is not gratuitously high.

4.4. Modification

Modification seems to occur for two main reasons. It may be an obvious solution when a concept is missing from the target culture and the preservation of the logical content would entail an increase of processing effort not justified by the gains in contextual effects. For instance, the Hungarian expression *önkéntes rendőr*, meaning 'voluntary policeman' is left out in the translation, because in the target culture there is no comparable institution and the concept is not vital in terms of the development of the story, thus the translator decided that the loss in contextual effect is more tolerable here than the potential increase of processing effort which would result from the preservation of the expression. In other instances we find that the translator renders the original by an expression activating a completely different concept, but which, being familiar for the target reader, requires less processing effort (English *shoe repair shop* for Hungarian *harisnyaszemfelszedő*, meaning 'stockings mender', English *the market* for Hungarian *közért*, meaning 'a kind of grocery shop').

Another typical case is when some encyclopaedic assumptions are not present in the target cultural context and the relevance of the utterance can be ensured in the most cost-effective way by modifying both the logical and the encyclopaedic content of the original (English *Silly Billy* for Hungarian

Bunkócska te drága, reference to a Russian song well-known in the Hungary of the Communist era.).

5. Conclusions

As for the use of the different operations in implementing strategic intentions, the examples seem to justify the assumption that transference and translation proper, motivated by an attempt to preserve the contextual effects of the original, serve as the essential means of foreignising, while substitution and modification basically serve the purposes of domesticating, since their use is sanctioned primarily by the need to optimise the level of processing effort.

The foreignising approach is most marked with expressions referring to persons and topographic features which serve to establish the cultural and physical setting for the story and are predominantly transferred, while the domesticating approach is most apparent in the case of expressions relating to situation schemas, which are almost exclusively substituted, since these are so deeply entrenched in the cognitive environments of readers that any deviation here would probably result in irrelevant effects because of an unwarranted increase in the effort required to process the expressions in question.

What a closer look at the examples suggests is that the target text is fairly balanced in the sense that while it reveals a strong overall inclination toward the foreignising strategy, this is not accomplished in a rigid manner and it gives way to domesticating procedures when their use seems more appropriate. Naturally, in a secondary communication situation the ideal of direct translation, which could only be achieved, if at all, though by no means indubitably, through an uncompromising foregnising strategy, is not a realistic aim. It makes a lot more sense to accept that the differences between the cultural contexts will inevitably lead to losses in translation and to try and do the best one can in such a situation: compromise and let go of certain communicative intentions of the original in favour of other more directly relevant ones which can be saved.

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