

MORPHO-SYNTACTIC EXPANSIONS AS STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN TRANSLATION

1. Introduction

Due to differences in the source language (SL) and target language (TL) systems and differences in SL and TL usage norms, as well as some other factors related to the SL text, the translator and the receiver of the TL text, original structures often undergo structural changes in the process of translation.

Structural changes are morpho-syntactic expansions and reductions, which occur at sentential as well as at suprasentential level.

This paper is concerned with morpho-syntactic expansions (M-S expansions) at sentential level and is based on an analysis of 150 examples of M-S expansion observed in the translation of an English text (Christie 1975) into Slovenian (Christie 1978).

2. Morpho-syntactic expansions

2.1. A morpho-syntactic expansion may be broadly defined as any translation of the unit of translation UT which is morpho-syntactically more explicit than the given UT. However, for the purpose of establishing whether a change in the translation of a certain text involves a morpho-syntactic expansion or not this very general definition needs to be elaborated. In particular, it is necessary to specify when exactly a translation of the unit of translation UT can be considered morpho-syntactically more explicit than the given UT.

We proceed from the following assumption: a certain number of semantic data may be contained in a single expression or distributed among several expressions, which results in different degrees of “transparency”. Transparency involves the relation between the number of semantic data and the number of linguistic means used to express them. The greater the number of semantic data and the smaller the number of linguistic means which are used to express them - the greater the transparency, and vice versa. Consider, for instance, sentences (1) and (2):

(1) Going home, I met an old friend of mine.

(2) When I was going home, I met an old friend of mine.

(1), with its participle clause, contains several semantic data: two actions in the past, with the same agent, simultaneity of the actions and a temporal link between

them. In (2) these two actions are expressed by two predicators with finite verb forms, indicating tense, the sameness of the agents is shown by two identical (expressed) subjects, and the type of link between the actions by a temporal conjunction. The transparency of (2) is greater than that of (1) since the semantic data implicit in (1) are explicitly expressed in (2).

In view of the above, a morpho-syntactic expansion may be defined as follows:

A morpho-syntactic expansion is any translation of the unit of translation UT in which the semantic data contained in the UT are expressed by a greater number of morpho-syntactic means than in the given UT.

On the basis of the above definition the following types of changes in translation have been considered as instances of M-S expansion:

(i) ENGL: non-finite clause →

SLOV: finite clause, e.g. (3):

(3) ENGL: Some parents who knew no better had taken her for the great Miss Bulstrode herself, not knowing that it was Miss Bulstrode's custom to retire to a kind of holy of holies to which only a selected and privileged few were taken.

(Christie 1975,7)

SLOV: Nekateri med starši, ki se niso kdove kako spoznali, so jo imeli za samo veliko gospodično Bulstrode, saj niso vedeli, da se gospodična Bulstrode navadno odmakne v najsvetejše vsega svetišča in k sebi pripusti le nekaj izbrancev in privilegirancev.¹

(Christie 1978, 7)

BACK-TRANSLATION: ... for (they) did not know that Miss Bulstrode usually retires to the holiest of all holly places and admits only a selected and privileged few.

M-S EXPANSION: ENGL= non-finite clause, SLOV= finite clause/
Subject: ENGL= unexpressed, implied in the context, SLOV= indicated by the verb form (*niso vedeli*- 3rd person, plural, past tense)/
Link (causal) with matrix clause: ENGL=unexpressed, SLOV= expressed (by the conjunction *kajti* -'for')

(ii) ENGL: passive clause without the agent *by*-phrase →

SLOV: active clause, e.g. (4):

(4) ENGL: /Both Miss Vansittart and Miss Chadwick appeared on the occasion./ "They'll be taken to the presence", decided Ann.

(Christie 1975, 8)

1 Underlining is used to mark the directly expanding structure and the structure which results from the expansion.

SLOV: /Za to priložnost sta se prikazali obe gospodični Vansittartova in Chadwickova./

“Peljali jih bosta k Njej”, je sklenila Ann.

(Christie 1978, 9)

BACK-TRANSLATION: “(They) will take them to Her,”....

M-S EXPANSION: ENGL= passive clause, SLOV=active clause/
ENGL= agent by-phrase unexpressed, implied in the context, SLOV=
subject indicated by the verb form (*peljali bosta* - 3rd person, dual,
future tense)

(iii) ENGL: elliptical clause →

SLOV: non-elliptical clause, e.g. (5):

(5) ENGL: A casual sort of message to leave for a sister that he might never see again - but in some ways the more casual the better.

(Christie 1975, 25)

SLOV: Hudo vsakdanje besede, namenjene sestri, ki je morebiti nikoli več ne boš videl - pravzaprav pa, bolj ko so vskadanje, bolje je.

(Christie 1978, 35)

BACK-TRANSLATION: ... - but, actually, more casual as (they) are, better (it) is.

M-S EXPANSION: ENGL= elliptical clause, SLOV= non-elliptical clause
ENGL= subject and predicator ellipited, implied in the context,
SLOV= subject (of the clause of proportion) indicated by the verb form (*so* -3rd person, plural, present tense)

2.2. In determining the structure which expands in the translation, we have observed the “principle of locality”, according to which the expanding structure is the one which expands directly and not the structure whose immediate or non-immediate constituent is the structure which directly expands. (Cf. (3) above, in which the whole sentence might be taken as the expanding structure (ENGL=sentence with a non-finite clause, SLOV= sentence with a finite clause), but following the locality principle, the expanding structure is the ENGL non-finite clause only.)

3. The type of original structure and morpho-syntactic expansions

3.1. The analysis of the corpus examples has shown that M-S expansions occur with phrases and clauses realizing various phrase and clause elements. It seems, however, that structures with certain syntactic functions, notably those functioning as phrase modifiers and adverbials, are particularly prone to expansion. The number of expansions involving structures in these functions is noticeably greater than that involving structures in other functions.

3.1.1. Syntactic “centre”/ “periphery”

According to Quirk et al. 1985 the adverbial is the most “peripheral” and the predicator the most “central” element of the clause. The other elements (subject, object, subject complement, object complement) are (in varying degrees) more peripheral (less central) than the predicator and less peripheral (more central) than the adverbial (op.cit., 49-50). The status of a clause element as to the centre/ periphery distinction is determined on the basis of the following criteria: (i) its position in the clause (initial, medial, final), (ii) the (non-)obligatoriness of its presence in the clause, (iii) its mobility within the clause (i.e. whether it can be moved to a different position), and (iv) its capacity to determine the number and kind of other obligatory elements. With respect to these criteria, adverbials are the most peripheral clause elements: their position is most frequently final, they are mostly optional and mobile, and they do not determine the number and kind of other elements which must be present in the clause. (Op.cit., 50.)²

Although all adverbials do not fulfill all the criteria for peripheral status, and are therefore not peripheral to the same degree,³ they can be said to be in general more peripheral than the other elements.

We may extend the distinction between “centre” and “periphery” to complex phrases and their elements, the headword being the central element while modifiers are peripheral elements. The headword is normally obligatory and modifiers are optional. Despite the fact that modifiers, too, may sometimes be obligatory, they are always peripheral relative to the headword if dependency relations in the complex phrase are considered. The headword is the “controlling element” (“controller”), while modifiers are “dependents” (cf. Matthews 1981, 160-3), and in this sense, peripheral.

In view of the above, modifiers, despite the fact that, like adverbials, they are not peripheral to the same degree, may in general be considered more peripheral than the headword.

3.1.2. Semantic “centre” / “periphery”

The distinction between “centre” and “periphery” may also be drawn on semantic grounds.

The proposition (the “underlying semantic base of the sentence” - Toporišič 1984, 423) consists of the predicator and the participants, the latter being either actants or circumstants (ibid.). As in the case of clause elements, a gradient relating the elements of the proposition as to the degree to which they are central/peripheral may be posited, with the predicator at one end of the scale (“central”), circumstants at the other

2 Adverbials are also considered peripheral by Matthews 1981, in the context of his distinction between “complements” and “peripheral elements” (op.cit., 123-7).

3 Thus, for instance, adverbials of place are obligatory with some verbs (cf. **He put the book. / He put the book on the table*), whereas some adverbials are not mobile, e.g. adverbials of time/outcome expressed by an infinitival clause can occur in final position only (Quirk et al. 1985).

(“peripheral”) and actants in intermediate positions. The predicator, which on the syntactic level is the verb element (or “predicator” in the syntactic sense), is the most central element of the proposition at least in two respects: it determines the number and kind of participants, and it may alone form the “propositional nucleus”.⁴ On the other hand, circumstants (adverbials on the syntactic level) are the most peripheral since they do not determine the number and kind of the other elements of the proposition and are normally not part of the propositional nucleus. Between the predicator and the other elements of the proposition there exist links of varying strength, the weakest link being that between the predicator and circumstants (Kovačič 1989, 17). In this respect, too, circumstants may be considered the most peripheral elements of the proposition.

In the case of clausal adverbials (finite, non-finite and verbless) the centre/periphery distinction may be related to the restrictive/non-restrictive distinction. The latter normally applies to postmodifying relative clauses, but may be extended to adverbial clauses. The restrictive adverbial clause restricts the situation described in the matrix clause to the circumstances it describes (Quirk et al. 1985, 1076). By contrast, the non-restrictive adverbial clause provides only additional, non-essential information on the circumstances accompanying the situation in the matrix clause (ibid.). Since they do not give essential information about the situation in the matrix clause, non-restrictive clauses may be considered more peripheral than restrictive ones.

In the examples analysed the majority of adverbial clauses which expand in translation are non-restrictive, and hence peripheral.

In the case of modifiers in nominal phrases, the restrictive/non-restrictive distinction is relevant for both premodifiers and postmodifiers (clausal and non-clausal). As to the centre/periphery distinction, non-restrictive modifiers (like non-restrictive adverbials) may be considered more peripheral than restrictive ones.

The number of expanding restrictive noun phrase modifiers in our examples is greater than the number of non-restrictive ones.

3.1.3. The structures which, according to the results of our analysis expand relatively most frequently are typically structures which are both syntactically and semantically highly peripheral. Hence the following assumption can be made: syntactically and semantically more peripheral structures expand more frequently than syntactically and semantically less peripheral structures. Adverbials expand more frequently than the other clause elements, non-restrictive adverbials expanding more frequently than restrictive ones. Modifiers expand more frequently than headwords, whereby in the case of modifiers in nominal phrases, non-restrictive modifiers expand more frequently than restrictive ones.⁵

4 The propositional nucleus comprises the indispensable elements of the proposition (Toporišič 1984, 423).

5 As far as restrictive and non-restrictive modifiers in nominal phrases are concerned the results of our analysis apparently do not confirm this assumption - the number of expansions of restrictive modifiers is greater than that of non-restrictive ones. However, this may be due to the fact that

The above assumption should, of course, be tested for validity by examining a more comprehensive corpus of texts of different types and their corresponding translations. At this point it is, however, interesting to note that Kovačič 1989, in her discussion of ellipsis in subtitling translation from English into Slovenian, notices that most frequently ellipsed are “/.../ expressions which are linked with their superordinate elements by weaker links - modifiers, circumstants and third actants” (op.cit., 17). These are elements that we have considered to be (in varying degrees) more peripheral than headwords and predicates. This suggests that in the context of translation, the centre/periphery distinction may be relevant not only for M-S expansion but also for its opposite - reduction (with ellipsis as the extreme form of the latter). A comparative analysis of various types of structural change occurring in translation may therefore be warranted in order to establish whether the above assumption may be generalized as follows: relatively more peripheral structures are more prone to change in translation than relatively less peripheral ones.

3.2. Among the expanding structures in the analysed examples there is a relatively large number of non-finite (infinitive, participle, gerund) and verbless clauses. They belong to the category of “reduced” (known in the literature also as “abridged”, “abbreviated”, “contracted”) clauses, which are derived by reduction from finite clauses. (Cf. the non-finite clause in (3) above (*not knowing that...*) and its finite counterpart (*for/since they did not know that...*.) The extent of the reduction varies relative to the number and kind of the parts of the finite clause which it affects, the result being a greater or lesser degree of syntactic compression.

Non-finite and verbless clauses are less explicit than their finite counterparts. This is due to the fact that non-finite clauses lack tense markers and modal auxiliaries, and verbless clauses the verb element. In addition, both types of clauses may lack the subject and/or a subordinating conjunction (cf. the non-finite clause in (3) above). The subject and/or the semantic relationship with the matrix clause is/are thus implicit and must be inferred from the linguistic or extra-linguistic context.

The greater frequency of expansion of syntactically reduced structures relative to non-reduced structures may partly be attributed to a general tendency in translation, the tendency to explicate the original (cf. Steiner 1976, 277, Levy 1982, 145, Nida/Taber 1982, 163). Syntactically reduced structures are less explicit, semantically less transparent than non-reduced ones and therefore undergo M-S expansion more frequently.

modifiers in the original text are predominantly restrictive. The number of restrictive and non-restrictive modifiers in the original text, regardless of whether they expand in the translation or not, would therefore have to be established before a tenable conclusion could be drawn as to the implications of the results for the assumption concerned.

4. Concluding remarks

4.1. Our findings concerning the greater frequency of M-S expansions of syntactically and semantically more peripheral structures and of syntactically reduced structures relative to more central and non-reduced structures respectively are relativized due to our corpus being restricted in scope and variety. The relative frequency of expansion of a certain type of structure depends on various factors involved in the translation process (e.g. text type and genre, the approach to translation, the translator's personal style, etc.) as well as on the relative frequency of the type of structure concerned in the original text itself. Further research is therefore needed, which should include the investigation of a number of texts of different types and genres and their corresponding translations, the relative frequency of a certain type of structure in various original texts by the same author, various original texts by the same author and corresponding translations by different translators, and the relative frequency of expansion of a certain type of structure in various translations by the same translator, within the context of various translation language pairs.

4.2. The kind of research into M-S expansions as outlined in 4.1. above would be relevant for all of the three main components of the science of translation: the general, language-pair-independent science of translation, the language-pair-bound descriptive science of translation and the language-pair-bound applied science of translation.⁶

It may be expected that this kind of research may show whether our findings about the relatively greater frequency of M-S expansion of certain types of original structure are language-pair-independent and may be generalized to a sufficient extent to be included in the general theory of translation.

Extensive empirical research allows for generalizations concerning M-S expansions which occur in a particular translation pair (their characteristics, types and the relative frequency of individual types), thus making an important contribution to the development of the descriptive science of translation.

Generalized statements about the characteristics, types and relative frequency of individual types of M-S expansion in the context of a particular translation pair may be utilized in translation teaching. They may be included in the study of translation procedures within the framework of university courses designed for future translators, and, on a more practical level, they may serve as a basis for making classified lists of M-S expansions pertaining to a particular translation pair. Such lists are, of course, not to be taken as instructions which would automatically ensure high-quality translation but rather as a means of developing an awareness of the possible alternatives available in the TL for the translation of a particular structure of the SL. This is of importance for the future translator and the beginner with little translation experience since, being familiar with the whole range of alternatives, he/she is potentially more likely to choose the one which suits the concrete translation situation best.

6 The taxonomy of the science of translation referred to is that proposed by Wilss 1982, 78-80.

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Povzetek

OBLIKOSLOVNO-SKLADENJSKE RAZŠIRITVE KOT STRUKTURNE SPREMEMBE PRI PREVAJANJU

V prispevku obravnavamo oblikoslovno-skladenjske razširitve, ki nastajajo v okviru povedi pri prevajanju iz angleščine v slovenščino.

Oblikoslovno-skladenjsko razširitev definiramo kot vsak tisti prevod prevodne enote PE, ki je oblikoslovno-skladenjsko bolj ekspliciten kot dana prevodna enota PE. Na podlagi razčlenbe zbranega gradiva ugotavljamo skladenjske in pomenske značilnosti izvornih zgradb, ki se v prevodu oblikoslovno-skladenjsko razširijo, ter relativno pogostnost oblikoslovno-skladenjskih razširitev različnih vrst izvornih zgradb. Razčlenba je pokazala, da se razširjajo tako besedne zveze kot stavki, v vlogi besednozveznih in stavčnih členov, da pa se nekatere vrste izvornih zgradb razširjajo razmeroma pogosteje kot druge. Zgradbe, ki so pogosteje podvržene tovrstnim strukturnim spremembam so skladenjsko in pomensko (bolj) obrobne zgradbe ter skladenjsko reducirane zgradbe. Tako po pogostnosti razširitev izstopajo zgradbe v vlogi prislovnih določil in besednozveznih določil ter polstavčne zgradbe, ki nastanejo z redukcijo stavkov z osebno glagolsko obliko v povedku.

Navedene ugotovitve o večji pogostnosti razširitev (bolj) obrobnih zgradb v primerjavi z (bolj) osrednjimi, in reduciranih v primerjavi z nereduciranimi so relativizirane, ker izhajajo iz razčlenbe količinsko in vrstno omejenega gradiva in se nanašajo na en sam prevodni jezikovni par. Da bi jih lahko utemeljeno posplošili, je potrebno nadaljnje raziskovanje, pri katerem bi upoštevali večje število različnih vrst besedil ter različne prevodne jezikovne pare. Pričakujemo, da bi na ta način lahko izpeljali posplošitve, ki bi bile relevantne tako za splošno teorijo prevajanja kot za prevajalsko prakso in pouk prevajanja.