

The *as-if* game and literary translation

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The paper takes up one of the findings of a PhD project by the author on Explicitation and Translator Style. It presents a more detailed analysis, demonstrating the potential vital link between manual analysis of translation corpora and their automatic and semi-automatic analysis in disclosing individual translator style in literary translation. The phenomenon under analysis is translation shifts involving the presentation of fictional facts as subjectively perceived by fictional characters or the narrator on the cline between semblance and reality, an issue essential to the construction of fictional worlds, whether in non-translated or translated texts.

Key Words: translator style, literary translation, automatic and semi-automatic analysis of parallel corpora, explication, implicitation, as-if shifts

Introduction

The study builds on a particular finding arrived at as a by-product of a PhD research project focused on explication and individual translator style in literary translation (Baker 2000), a pilot study that has been published in *Translation Research Projects 1* (Kamenická 2008).

Methodologically, the present study will be concerned with showing how “manual” and computer analyses of translation corpora can benefit from each other, especially how manual, small-scale analysis can provide stimuli for automatic and semi-automatic analysis (and vice versa). This lends support to the argument that even in the age of advanced corpus methodologies, methods rather demanding in terms of time and labour do not lose their value as a natural counterpart.

The paper explores how individual translators explicate the subjective and mediated nature of perceptions of reality in fiction using what will be referred to as “as-if shifts”.

The PhD project that was at the origin of the present research compared the individual styles of two Czech translators of modern fiction working from English into Czech. That research looked at their explicational and implicational behaviour, contrasting their approaches to translation at the level of explication and implicitation across their professional careers, and yielding some hypotheses about the role of explicational and implicational behaviour in translator style in general.

Serving as a starting point for the research in as-if shifts, our reference to the thesis itself will have to be very brief and rather elliptical.

Manual analysis as a starting point

The corpus on which the first project was based consisted of samples of parallel English/Czech text 5,000 words each, taken from 9 novels and their translations for each of the two translators. The translations were spread over more than 15 years of the translators' more or less simultaneous professional careers. Manual analysis of these samples aimed at identification and classification of occurrences of translation-inherent explicitation and implicitation revealed the two translators as two distinct explicational types.

Quantitatively, this distinction was reflected in the plicitation quotient, defined as the ratio of the number of occurrences of translation-inherent implicitation to the number of occurrences of translation-inherent explicitation in a representative sample of translated text.

$$\text{Plicitation quotient} = \frac{\text{tr-inh implicitation}}{\text{tr-inh explicitation}}$$

The first translator, Antonín Přidal, was found to use explicitation and implicitation in a very balanced manner throughout his career—his plicitation quotient was slightly higher than 1 (1.10 ± 0.30 ; <0.66 ; $1.53>$), which amounts to saying that he used implicitation even slightly more often than explicitation. This balance was characteristic of different subcategories of explicitation and implicitation based on the Hallidayian metafunctions of language, too. For instance at the level of characters' discourse, which proved to differentiate the two translators substantially, Přidal's use of the three dominant types of explicitation—experiential, interpersonal and textual—was extremely balanced. Přidal was very flexible in working with meaning potential and used a wide variety of explicational and implicitational strategies; he hardly ever explicitated metaphors and his numerous implicitations formed a cline with translation omissions on the other end of the scale. His omissions were easy to interpret as stemming from motivated decisions. On the whole, Přidal's explicitation profile was characterized by variety, context-sensitiveness and divergence.

The other translator, Radoslav Nenadál, whose style provided inspiration for the research we will soon be concerned with, was consistent in preferring explicitation throughout his career. His mean plicitation quotient was radically different from Přidal's, 0.31 ± 0.13 , and his plicitation quotients for the individual translations were all in an interval not overlapping with

Přidal's: <0.15; 0.60>. He tended to strengthen the interpersonal component of the explicit texture, especially at the level of characters' discourse, but in narrator's discourse, too. In the light of the small number of implicitations in his translations, this shift appeared rather significant. In contrast to Přidal, Nenadál's approach to characters' discourse upheld explicit communication of interpersonal meanings at the cost of experiential meanings. Nenadál tended to opt for some specific types of explicitation repeatedly and explicitated metaphors quite often. His translation omissions were quite frequent, too, but the motivation seemed much less clear than with Přidal. Nenadál's use of explicitation and implicitation showed him to be a more or less convergent type of translator (Kamenická 2007).

One type of explicitation Nenadál resorted to repeatedly was shifts using the Czech equivalent of "as if" to render what were often figurative meanings in the ST:

- (1) ST: It was a nice day for bodies. There was a sensual anticipation about, an assurance of marvels shortly to be manifest. (*Dog Soldiers*)

TT: It was a beautiful day for human bodies. There was the air of sensual anticipation, as if some marvels were certain to manifest very soon. [back-translation into English, here and throughout]

- (2) ST: Then they went away, all of them, and he was alone. The mists cleared a little and he looked about him. (*Hurry On Down*)

TT: Then they went away, all of them, and Charles was alone. It was as if the mists had cleared a little in front of him and he looked about.

Generally speaking, these explicitations are concerned with spelling out what was presented as reality in the ST to communicate a particular *perception* of reality in the TT.

Apart from these, there were also similar explicitations that were not marked by the use of the Czech equivalent of "as if"; they involve other lexical items betraying the translator's concern with rather meticulous distinguishing between reality and semblance:

- (3) ST: The physical shock snapped his condition of semi-paralysis, and with that moment his agonizing parturition was over. (*Hurry On Down*)

- TT: The physical shock snapped his condition of semi-paralysis, and with that moment his agony reminding of/resembling parturition was over.
- (4) ST: Science is the New Muse—it's as plain as the nose on your face. Couple science with a general leveling of taste everywhere, and the demise is inevitable. (*Set This House on Fire*)
- TT: Science is the New Muse—it's as plain as the nose on your face. Couple science with that general leveling of taste everywhere you look, and you will view this demise of art as inevitable.

What seems important about Nenadál's insistence on identifying perceptions of reality for what they are in the narrative structure of the literary text is the implied subjectivity—the perception is attributed to an observer with more explicitness than it was in the ST. This often means that the focalizer's presence becomes more tangible. The effect of such a shift then naturally depends on the relation between this focalizer's point of view, which can be referred to as a "local point of view", and the narrator's point of view.

The numbers of occurrences of these shifts in the Nenadál subcorpus are indicated in Table 1.

Publication date	Novel	Author	No. of as-if shifts
1968	<i>To Have and Have Not</i>	Hemingway	3
1973	<i>Set This House on Fire</i>	Styron	3
1978	<i>Hurry On Down</i>	Wain	9
1982	<i>Dog Soldiers</i>	Stone	3
1984	<i>Sophie's Choice</i>	Styron	3
1987	<i>The World According to Garp</i>	Irving	1
1987	<i>The Grapes of Wrath</i>	Steinbeck	1
1990	<i>Falconer</i>	Cheever	0
1991	<i>The Long March</i>	Styron	5
Total			28

Table 1. Occurrences of as-if shifts in the Nenadál corpus

The numbers of occurrences of this particular type of shift may seem not too high, but the figures gain significance when we realize that none of the sections by the other translator contained any such shift. They seem to be a more or less permanent feature of the translator's style, relatively independent of the ST style.

As-if shifts and fictional semantics

The effect of these “as-if shifts” will be discussed in this paper, including shifts featuring other lexis foregrounding the distinction between semblance and reality in the TL, as in examples (3) and (4). These might of course be interpreted in terms of classic stylistics of fiction, i.e. in terms of changing the “distance” between the narrator, the characters, and the reader, depending on the particular narrative point of view.

Reference will nevertheless be made to another theoretical framework, whose potential seems not fully recognized and unexploited in literary translation studies yet—the theory of fictional worlds. This opportunity will also be used to refer specifically to the contribution to the theory of fictional worlds by Lubomír Doležel, an outstanding literary scholar of Czech origin who has worked at universities in the United States and Canada since 1965 (*Heterocosmica* 1998).

The principle at the very core of the theory of fictional worlds is that fictional texts are performative speech acts endowed with the ultimate illocutionary force capable of bringing about a radical change in the world, namely creating a possible world with its fictional facts distinct from the actual one (Doležel 1998: 150). The concepts constituting the axis of Doležel’s fictional semantics are the twin concepts of extension/intension and extensional/intensional function, structuring his theory into extensional and intensional semantics.

Boiled down for the sake of brevity, extension is “the meaning constituent of a linguistic sign that directs the sign toward the world” (1998: 136) and extensional meaning can be expressed in a formalized metalanguage based on normalized rules for paraphrase. Text intension, which is in a sense a much more complicated concept, refers to the aspect of text meaning expressed by texture, i.e. the exact wording of the text (1998: 282). In other words, intensional meaning is the meaning component that slips through paraphrase and is affected by any change of the texture (including translation). While extensional meaning is aesthetically neutral, it is at the level of intensional meaning that aesthetically effective meaning is achieved.

It is necessary to stress that *fictional worlds are extensional entities* constructed by the author of the text constitutive of the fictional world and reconstructed by the reader through the texture of the fictional work (1998: 38). The translator of a fictional text is thus doubly involved with fictional-world reconstruction. In contrast with fictional worlds as such, *fictional existence is an intensional phenomenon*, Doležel takes care to stress, and according to him, “[t]o exist fictionally means to exist in different modes, ranks, and degrees” (1998: 147) and indeed, this ontological depth is found to underlie the aesthetic appeal of a plot.

This probably suggests where I am heading: even having introduced Doležel's fictional semantics perhaps much too sketchily, we can see that Nenadál's as-if shifts transform fictional existence in a major way.

(5) ST: Jazz, the music not of fusion but of fission, was a constant explosion in my face, and when it ceased, to allow the record-changer to softly whirl and plip-plop, the silence was eerie and burdensome, and I recall wondering at the tone of this gathering, which from the outset had the mingled features of despair, hostility, and the deplorable inertia of a meeting of southern Baptist young people. (*Set This House on Fire*)

TT: Jazz, fragmenting rather than synthetic music, was giving me the impression of exploding into my face all the time, and when it ceased and the record-changer's soft whirl of disc turning was heard, an eerie and burdensome silence spread [in the room] and I recall well wondering about the mood of this gathering, which from the outset had been drowning in a mixture of despair and hostility, reminding of the deplorable inertia of a meeting of southern Baptist young people.

In Doležel's intensional semantics of fictional worlds, fictional texts grant fictional existence to fictional entities by the procedure of authentication, which can be formally expressed by the intensional authentication function. It is an essential task of intensional fictional semantics to study under which conditions fictional entities introduced through the texture, whatever they may be, become fictional facts. This is accounted for by the so-called authentication function. Fictional worlds as re-constructed by Nenadál seem to incorporate an increased number of fictional entities whose status as fictional facts is claimed by the characters and narrators of the constitutive texts with much less certainty than in the STs.

Towards semi-automatic corpus analysis: a pilot study

We recall that in the original corpus, the distribution of as-if shifts (1a) correlated with some characteristics of translator style such as a general preference for explicitation over implicitation, explicitation of metaphor and convergent translator style in general, (1b) did not correlate with the other translator style characteristics such as prolific use of implicitation, and (1c) the presence/absence of these shifts as well as the other characteristics of translator behaviour were relatively stable throughout the translators' careers. Further, (2) a large majority of as-if shifts can be easily retrieved by automatic corpus search using the as-if node in the TL and subjecting the parallel concordances to a subsequent sorting-out. All of the above make the

as-if shift a potential candidate for semi-automatic analysis of larger corpora of literary texts with a view to analyzing translator style. One important additional benefit that as-if shifts provide is that (3) they are easily analyzable within the immediate context of the parallel concordance line.

Although diagnosing a translator's approach to employment/avoidance of explicatory as-if shifts is bound to provide a one-sided view of the translator's style, it seems a worthwhile undertaking this since it amounts to tapping textual spots where intensional meaning plays a major role in the ST.

The spin-off project therefore focuses on the potential of studying explicatory as-if shifts in literary translation corpora. The relevant characteristics of as-if shifts in the parallel (ST/TT) corpus were the frequencies with which as-if nodes (including nodes based on similar lexis) appeared in the ST and in the TT and the dominant types of these occurrences in the ST and the TT, presupposing that overall shifts between types and frequencies would be indicative of the particular translator style.

For the purpose of estimating how much this kind of analysis can reveal about the translator style, a small ad hoc corpus consisting of the parallel texts of five novels by different authors and their Czech translations was created based on the K2 corpus, developed at the Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic. The novels/novel translations forming the corpus are listed in Table 2.

ST author	Novel title	Translator	
Louise Erdrich	<i>Love Medicine</i>	Translator A	Alena Jindrová
L. M. Silko	<i>Ceremony</i>	Translator B	Alexandra Hubáčková
Joseph Heller	<i>Catch XXII</i>	Translator C	Miroslav Jindra
Ken Kesey	<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i>	Translator D	Jaroslav Kořán
Kingsley Amis	<i>Lucky Jim</i>	Translator E	Jiří Mucha

Table 2. Ad hoc corpus used to test as-if shift search

Table 3 lists the numbers of explicatory as-if shifts, i.e. occurrences where a zero as-if (or similar) node in the ST unit has been explicitated in the corresponding TT unit, per 100,000 words and puts them into the context of the frequency with which as-if nodes occur in the ST (Idiomatic use of as-if nodes was excluded from the count).

ST/TT	As-if shifts per 100,000 words	As-if ST occurrences per 100,000 words
Erdrich	12.2	112
Silko	4.4	87
Heller	6.9	55
Kesey	0.9	71
Amis	5.5	96
<i>Nenadál</i> <i>corpus</i>	62.2	

Table 3. As if shifts vs. as-if ST occurrences in the corpus

It is interesting to note that even in the context of the other five novels, Nenadál's use of as-if shifts is still very significant, exceeding the incidence in the other texts several to many times. Does it mean that as-if shifts in the new corpus were insignificant?

It can be seen, for instance, that the translation containing the highest number of as-if shifts was that of *Love Medicine*. This figure must nevertheless be interpreted in the context of the overall frequency of occurrence of as-if nodes in the source text, which was the highest in the corpus, too. Although the translator of *Love Medicine* tended to use these shifts often, in doing this she employed a textual feature that had a strong presence already in the ST. Rather than adding her own style feature to the text, the translator of *Love Medicine* went along with a feature of the author's style, avoiding an exaggeration of it, as the figures in the relevant line of Table 3 show. Surveying the list of as-if-type node ST occurrences in *Love Medicine*, it is easy to see that comparisons are indeed an integral part of the poetics of the novel, whose multiple narrators indeed see the world they live in through as-if lens:

(6) ST: As if the sky were one gigantic memory for us all. (*Love Medicine*)

(7) ST: I felt like my mind was coming off its hinge, flapping in the breeze, hanging by the hair of my own pain. (*Love Medicine*)

(8) ST: Although the day was overcast, the snow itself reflected such light that she was momentarily blinded. It was like going underwater. (*Love Medicine*)

A radically different situation arises in the translation of *Catch 22* by Joseph Heller, the novel where explicit comparisons (searchable by means of as-if nodes) played the least role (55 as-if node ST occurrences per 100,000 words). In addition, a few examples of these ST "as-if situations", as the

occurrences of as-if type nodes in the ST may be referred to, are enough to show that their function in the ST was very different from as-if situations in *Love Medicine*:

- (9) ST: A door opened at the other end of the room and Colonel Cathcart stepped into the basement as though from a closet. (*Catch 22*)
- (10) ST: They looked at me as if I had, at that very moment, walked in the door. (*Catch 22*)
- (11) ST: Then passion overtook them. She hung on to him like they were riding the tossing ground, her teeth grinding in his ear. (*Catch 22*)

The Czech translation of *Catch 22* happens to be the text with the second highest frequency of as-if shifts in the corpus, while its ST has the lowest number of as-if node occurrences. The use of comparisons is not typical of the ST, which makes the relatively high frequency of occurrence of as-if shifts (even if it is much lower than in the *Nenadál* corpus) even more significant and worth a closer examination. In the case of *Catch 22*, the list of parallel concordances is very revealing. Although idiomatic uses of as-if nodes in the TT were first excluded from the count as distorting the overall figure by reflecting some possibilities naturally available in the target language (their TL repertoremic rather than textemic nature) while, in fact, failing to explicitate, it was easy to see that specifically this “distortion” was typical of the translator of *Catch 22*, unlike the other translators, who hardly ever used idiomatic as-if shifts. Quoting a few examples might be useful:

- (12) ST: [...] hastening across the intersection guiltily (*Catch 22*)
 TT: [...] as if to escape fire (stock comparison in Czech)
- (13) ST: Luciana was gone, dead, probably; if not yet, then soon enough. (*Catch 22*)
 TT: “Luciana seemed to have disappeared from Earth’s surface; she might not have been alive any more; and if she was, she was bound to die very soon.
 (stock comparison in Czech)

- (14) ST: Then, just when that was blowing over, there was the matter of Clevinger's plane disappearing so mysteriously in thin air with every member of the crew [...] (*Catch 22*)
- TT: And when he seemed to start to recover more or less, there was the affair concerning Clevinger's plane, which disappeared so mysteriously including all the men on its board, as if swallowed by the skies.
(stock comparison in Czech)

In addition to the 6.9 non-idiomatic as-if shifts per 100,000 words, the parallel text of *Catch 22* contains as many as 18 idiomatic as-if shifts (stock comparisons) per 100,000 words. This finding stands out as an important feature of the individual translator style of Miroslav Jindra, the translator of *Catch 22*, and gains significance in the light of the fact that Jaroslav Kořán, another translator whose work was included in the corpus and who has been, like Miroslav Jindra, known for the fresh and idiomatic language of his translations, used stock comparisons much less often (3.5 occurrences per 100,000 words).

The method used here may be refined by extending the search to other nodes indicating potential explicatory shifts framing figurative meanings as similes. Examples of these other TL nodes for translation from English into Czech may be the Czech adjectival form of "as if" (*jakoby*) or the Czech equivalents of "similar" (*podobný*) and "připomínat" (*resemble*). Research into as-if shifts between particular languages may help add other nodes belonging to the repertoire.

Conclusion

The study presented here is to be viewed as a pilot study, evidencing, among other things, how even in the age of advanced corpus methodologies, manual analysis of small corpora can provide stimuli for semi-automatic analysis across larger corpora. Another, more specific purpose of the study was to gauge the benefits of studying explicatory as-if shifts in literary translation corpora. Using the method, the significance of these shifts as a style characteristic of a particular translator (Nenadál) has been confirmed on the background of other translators' work. It has been demonstrated that this search technique may show some translators (such as Jindrová, the translator of *Love Medicine*) employing as-if shifts in accordance with the ST author's broad use of simile as a figurative device, and others (such as Jindra, the translator of *Catch 22*) giving preference to the use of non-explicatory idiomatic as-if shifts (stock comparisons), while as-if shifts played no major role in the styles of other translators (those of Silko, Kesey and Amis). The analysis proved to be fast and provided enough information to assess the

significance of the identified trends. As such, it is easily applicable to even larger corpora. Further research in this area might be concerned for instance with (a) testing the consistency of identified trends for individual translators, and (b) testing the correlation between proneness to use explicitatory as-if shifts and other characteristics of individual translator style.

The value of the proposed automatic corpus search seems to be especially its potential to overcome the problems involved in studying literary translations via corpora. This study is complicated, among other things, by phenomena such as the complexity of metaphorical meaning structures and instances of authorial creativity in literary texts. Manual analysis of small-scale samples of text is extremely labour-consuming while the representativeness of these samples remains an issue. Studying the role of explicitatory as-if shifts using automatic search and quick post-search assessment can be viewed as a way to supplement small-scale analysis with a technique for exploring phenomena at the heart of literary text as viewed as truly *literary*.

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