Product and Process Perspectives:
an empirical study of explicitation in Chinese-English translation

Zhewei Fan
Georgia Institute of Technology, U.S.A.
zheweifan(a)gmail.com

ABSTRACT
Product- and process-oriented, this dissertation focuses on both the explicitness in translated texts and the implementation of explicitation in Chinese-English translation. In doing so, it provides a new cognitive framework for understanding explicitation as a strategic process.

A specially designed study of the translation process facilitates the exploration of several issues pertaining to explicitation: the relationship between the level of explicitness in translated texts and the amount of cognitive effort expended by translators in producing those texts; translators' reasons for adopting specific explicitation strategies and whether the resultant explicitness leads to easier cognitive processing by target readers; and the varying levels of strategic consistency and articulated recognition of explicitation among professional translators and their novice counterparts.

The study employs various research methods for the collection and analysis of data, effectively triangulating product and process perspectives. The source text is first marked with "areas of interest" (or sentence segments where explicitation is expected to occur). To enable a comparative analysis of explicitness cases on a macro-level, these AOIs and the corresponding segments in each of the six translations of the ST (three by students and three by professional translators) are then annotated for propositional content. The process data are collected primarily by a software program that logs translators' keystrokes at the computer. These results are examined beside the evidence of the translators' responses to questionnaires, retrospective reports and interviews with the researcher. Lastly, a readability survey of target readers assesses the extent to which explicitation does or does not enhance the target readership's comprehension of the translations.

Analysis and discussion of the data thus gathered yield the following conclusions: concern for target reader expectations and levels of readability leads to translators not always opting for explicitation in order to bridge linguistic-cultural gaps. Furthermore, high levels of explicitation do not necessarily imply correspondingly high levels of readability, although the results do admit the possibility of this correlation for specific types of explicitation. By extension, they also reveal that certain types of explicitation require more cognitive effort than others, often reflecting professional translators' conscious control over the translation process as a whole.

KEYWORDS: explicitation, propositional analysis, readability, translation process, triangulation of process and product.

Completion of Thesis
Place: Kent State University, U.S.A.
Year: 2012
Supervisor: Associate Professor Kelly Washbourne