

Foreword

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Aspects of Cohesion and Coherence in Translation: The case of Hungarian-English news translation

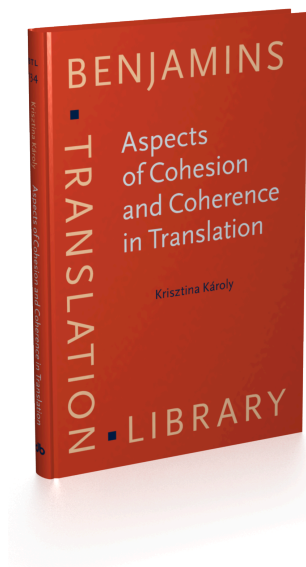
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Foreword

Translation Studies is an exceptionally demanding area of research that, because of the highly complex nature of its analytical focus (translation), needs to work together with a number of other disciplines to be able to answer the questions arising during scientific inquiry. This book deals with translational discourse production and, within that, its topic is the target language (re)production of one of its key elements, namely discourse coherence. Therefore the volume builds on the relevant theories and methods of Translation Studies and Discourse Analysis to be able to answer some basic questions related to translational discourse production that – despite their significance – have so far been neglected or under researched. Such a question is whether it is possible at all to analyse the target language (re)production of coherence in translation, and if yes, how? Can the theories and methods devised originally for the study of English original (i.e., not translated) and independent texts (i.e., texts that do not depend on each other like translations and their sources) be applied for the analysis of translation? How do some of the fundamental components of coherence, such as cohesive, rhetorical and generic structure “behave” in translation? How do the particular components of coherence relate to phenomena regarded as universal features of translation?

Although the state of the art in the discipline does not make it possible to answer all the questions and solve all of the problems and come up with “the” book or “the” solution, it is not a hopeless endeavour to deepen our understanding in certain fields crucial from the point of view of successful translation. This is the goal I set to myself here. So, in presenting the findings of the empirical investigations (in Chapters 4–7), in the following, I will rely on the results of my previous research and, for consistency of reasoning, I will summarize or reinterpret parts of them to meet the aims of the current undertaking.

The monograph reports on the findings of a long research project that started in 2007 and ended just recently. The project was sponsored partly by the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA/2011–2015) and by the János Bolyai Research Grant of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (2010–2013). I am grateful for their generous support which enabled me to conduct investigations that would have not been possible otherwise. This is the reason why certain sections of the chapters

reporting on the analyses have already been published in the form of journal articles¹ in English or Hungarian. Based on the aims of this monograph, the outcomes of these analyses have been re-evaluated and reinterpreted to be able to answer the questions motivating the current, larger scale investigation in a theoretically, empirically and methodologically well founded manner. Thus the work presented in this monograph brings significant added value to previous research, both in theory and in research methodology. The research questions in Chapters 4–7 function as subquestions of the main research questions of the monograph (enumerated in Section 1.2 of the introductory chapter). By establishing the connections between the outcomes of analyses conducted previously (in an isolated manner), this study manages to cater for one of the major shortcomings of earlier projects, which, due to their narrower focuses, could not bring the threads together and reveal the *relations/interactions* of the components of coherence traceable in discourse structure – a feature of discourse production that is indispensable to be able to formulate sufficiently informed assumptions. Furthermore, based on the theoretical work presented in Chapter 2 and the aggregated results of empirical research in Chapters 4–8, it has become possible to propose here a new, theory- and data-based, complex analytical instrument (the Complex Translational Discourse Analysis Model), which is capable of yielding novel insights into several, yet uncharted discourse level aspects of translation.

It is hard to judge at this point the value of this undertaking – only the achievements of future research will be able to do so. What may be stated with considerable confidence though is that to my knowledge no other work has been published so far that would deal with translation (as a special form of discourse production) applying a similarly complex theoretical framework and offering such a comprehensive discussion of all of the components (as well as the relations and interactions of the components) of coherence that may be traced in discourse structure.

Due to its complexity, the investigation brings new results and novel insights for several fields of inquiry. For Discourse Analysis, it identifies and systematizes the components of coherent discourse (as a complex phenomenon and a complex system) that may be traced in discourse structure and designs a both theoretically and methodologically sound analytical model for the study of translational discourse production. While there is a considerable body of literature available on the concept and the various types of models that exist in scientific inquiry, these do not deal with the special traits of the so called “analytical model”, despite the widespread application of such models in discourse studies. This book thus adds

1. Károly (2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d, 2013e, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e), Károly, Ábrányi, Kovalik Deák, Laszkács, Mészáros and Seresi (2013).

to the methodology of Discourse Analysis by revealing not only the stereotypical characteristics but also the possible applications of the analytical model.

The case studies presented here contribute to Genre Analysis and, within that, to our knowledge of the special characteristics of the news story genre. A genre-based approach was pursued, as genre is not merely a formal issue, it is much more than that: it offers a framework for our thoughts, actions and communication. The corpus explored in this book contains so called “analytical articles”. These articles, according to the outcomes of the case studies, describe events as news stories do: as a series of linearly and hierarchically organized elements. Thus analytical articles may be regarded as a subgenre of the news story genre. The analysis also shows that generic structure is related to and is in close interaction with all the other discourse level variables (i.e., the components of the cohesive, topical and rhetorical structures).

Corpus data provide evidence for the assumption that the (various) types of interactions of discourse level variables influence – in a stereotypical manner – the quality and the interpretability of the target text produced in translation. Consequently, the findings bring novel insights and useful outcomes for Translation Studies, too. As news stories are in the focus, the findings bear relevance primarily for news translation. The analyses manage to settle a debate related to this genre in the literature: with regard to loyalty to the source text, the investigations show that although translations are generally characterized by loyalty to sources, as a result of the shifts of coherence in discourse structure, the meaning (the information content) of the news stories change in translation. Total loyalty to source contents may thus not be justified.

The most significant contribution of this study is to the field of target text oriented translation research, by designing the Complex Translational Discourse Analysis Model. The target text oriented approach fiercely opposes the view which looks at the target text merely as a reconstruction of the source text. It focuses the attention on the target text and on the role it plays in the target language culture. This is the reason why I refer to translation as the “(re)production” of the source text: brackets indicate that the activity of the translator involves both reproduction and creative “production”, which means that I also look at it as creative work. Results of the analyses conducted using the Complex Translational Discourse Analysis Model seem to decide the debate: the data justify the assumption that the translation of the components of coherence identifiable in discourse structure is a highly complex and multifaceted process, which combines not only reproductive, but also a number of creative (productive) discourse construction tasks.

The analyses also add to our knowledge of the universals of translation. The focuses of the study motivated the investigation of the explicitation and the repetition avoidance hypotheses. Interestingly, while from a solely quantitative

perspective neither hypotheses seem to be justifiable by the data, the outcomes provide empirical evidence for the phenomenon of *shift of coherence* accompanying the process of translation and therefore appearing as an *inherent, universal feature of translation*.

The volume also undertakes the identification of discourse level translation strategies and thus it brings novel insights for strategy research both generally (at the level of theory) and more specifically (regarding the Hungarian–English language pair). As there is considerable inconsistency in the literature concerning the use of the term “strategy” and some other related concepts (including the notion of “discourse level strategy”), I discuss and define these as well. Translation research has dominantly concentrated on the translation strategies relating to the target language reproduction of intrasentential structures. If it has dealt with certain aspects of producing textuality (coherence) too, it referred to those comprehensively, as discourse strategies, without exploring or enumerating their main types and subgroups. This book reveals these as well on the basis of an in-depth analysis of Hungarian–English news translation. Since these discourse level strategies are crucial in producing a coherent target language text, their identification and raising translators’ awareness of these may help them select the appropriate translation method and produce a successful translation.

In view of the above, I recommend this book primarily, but not exclusively for translation researchers. For those who wish to get to know the essential characteristics of translation (as text) and obtain a deeper understanding of why and how translations (as texts) may be “different” from original (i.e., not translated) texts; for those who would like to see how an abstract, “subjective”/intuitive phenomenon like coherence may be described in an “objective” manner and what kind of (conscious and unconscious) discourse level strategies translators work with. These questions I believe are relevant for discourse analysts as well.

Even though the volume is mainly theory and research oriented, the results of the empirical investigations may offer useful information about news translation and the Hungarian–English language pair for practicing translators, professionals and students involved in translator training, too. The analyses call attention to a number of problems, phenomena and strategies accompanying the target language reproduction of coherence that translators are not necessarily aware of but may still affect – in a very subtle way, or even unnoticed – the quality of the translation produced.

The introductory chapter defines the subject of inquiry, the aims of the research, the theoretical background, the language under scrutiny, the genre and the type of translation investigated. The second chapter presents the Complex Translational Discourse Analysis Model and reveals the details of the theoretical and methodological work needed to devise the model. The third chapter discusses

the stereotypical characteristics of the translation type (news translation) and genre (the news story) that constitute the corpus applied to the first empirical testing of the Complex Translational Discourse Analysis Model. The subsequent Chapters (4, 5, 6 and 7) present the empirical analyses conducted to reveal the (English) target language reproduction of the cohesive, repetition, topical, rhetorical and generic structures of the texts in the corpus. These chapters follow the same organization: first, they outline the aims of the given investigation and its research questions; then the methods of analysis are presented in detail; the third section reports on the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses; and each chapter ends with the discussion of the theoretical questions relevant from the point of view of the topic (e.g., translation universals, shifts of structure and shifts of meaning, loyalty of content). The final, 8th chapter of the book summarizes the outcomes of the project in view of the aims specified at the outset. It assesses the value of the Complex Translational Discourse Analysis Model and demonstrates the kinds of descriptive and explanatory hypotheses that may be generated by it for the future study of coherence in translation. This is followed by the comparative analysis of the shifts of coherence identified, the discourse level translation strategies that produce these and the translation universals explored. The chapter ends by evaluating the outcomes of the study from the point of view of the science of text and Translation Studies.

I am grateful to all of those who have inspired and motivated me to write this book and helped me with their insightful reflections, useful advice and smart questions: my professors, colleagues and students. I would especially like to thank Kinga Klaudy and Gábor Tolcsvai Nagy for having read earlier versions of this volume and providing me with helpful comments. I am also indebted to the anonymous reviewers of John Benjamins Publishing Company for their valuable suggestions and constructive critical remarks that have greatly contributed to the quality of my work. Finally, I would like to gratefully thank my family, most of all my husband and daughter for their loving patience, support and understanding during the entire process of completing this book.

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