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Explicitation and (In)directness in Literary Translations from Japanese into English and Romanian: A Contrastive Analysis

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Abstract
A complex process that necessarily goes beyond the surface level of words and phrases, (literary) translation is also a means to understand the cultures whose products the translated texts are. In this article, I look at the English and the Romanian translations of two Japanese novels in an attempt to identify those elements that prove that the texts carry the load of the specific type of culture that both the translators and the readers belong to. More specifically, I analyse the way in which the discourse is reconstructed in English and Romanian in light of Edward T. Hall's high-context culture vs. low-context culture distinction. This article does not focus on the translation of culture-specific realities, as is the case with most studies that compare textual products belonging to different cultures, but on the way in which ordinary realities are rendered in English and Romanian. I look at the degree to which the context created by the Japanese authors is explicitly specified and the level of directness of the discourse in the two languages, as representative features of the high-context vs. low context cultures dichotomy. The examples analysed here suggest that the English translations tend to employ more strategies for an explicit specification of the context and to create a more direct discourse than the Romanian ones, which is consistent with the fact that English is a language considered typical of low-context culture spaces. Romanian translations are generally closer to the Japanese original, showing a more high-context culture perspective, confirming the existence of a continuum between the two extreme ends in Hall's dichotomy.

Keywords: translation strategies, cultural context, Japanese language, explicitation, (in)directness, high-context culture, low-context culture, Kikuko Tsumura, Genki Kawamura

A forever fascinating topic, translation – and especially literary translation – is a very fertile ground for analyzing the correspondence between languages, mentalities and worldviews. The process of translation does not concern words, but texts, and texts are the products of complex processes that incorporate the knowledge and interpretation of the real world, the representation of possible and imaginative worlds, intra- and interpersonal communication and so on. The cultural backgrounds of the text producer and of the text recipient are thus fundamental elements that the translator must consider when creating a version of a given text in a new language.

The present article starts from my experience as a literary translator from Japanese and English into Romanian, more specifically from the situation when, while confronting the English version of Japanese original texts, I frequently noted that the English text is sometimes moving away – in various ways – from the Japanese original, regardless of the translator. I do not refer to the specific cases of translating, for example, names for realia or for culturemes, but to the choices that the translator (or the editor) makes in regard to fragments of the text that do not contain any problematic words or concepts, the final result having a different twist than the original. My own observations were confirmed by various editors I have worked with, who commented that, more often than not, the English translations – which they generally use as reference for translations from Japanese – tend to 'sound' different from the Romanian translations that they receive, to the point that they sometimes "look like a completely different text" (personal communication with editor).

The question that arises is whether such cases have to do with the cultural background of the translators, on the one hand, and of the intended readers, on the other hand.

Research Question and Methodology

The main research question of the present article is thus to examine whether the strategies and techniques used while translating literary texts from Japanese into English and Romanian are consistent with and illustrate a specific type of cultural context. For that, I will start from Edward T. Hall's distinction between high-context and low-context cultures in an attempt to demonstrate that the choices which translators and/or editors make actually reflect features of the specific cultural context to which they, as well as the prospective readers, belong.

The examples that I analyse here are from two novels that I have translated from Japanese into Romanian and for which I have also had access to the English translation. The texts areこの世にたやすい仕事はない by Kikuko Tsumura, translated into English as *There's No Such Thing as an Easy Job* and in Romanian as *Nici o slujbă nu-i ușoară* (working title), and世界から猫が消えたなら by Genki Kawamura, translated into English as *If Cats Disappeared from the World* and in Romanian as *Dacă pisicile ar dispărea din lume*. Both novels are instances of contemporary Japanese literature and employ, to a rather large extent, dialogues that are very similar to everyday communication in real life, as well as fragments of intrapersonal communication.

Literature Review

On Translation

Before looking into the process of translation and the concrete strategies that it employs, it is vital to understand at what level of the language translation actually takes place. Eugenio Coseriu's view on language proves particularly useful, as it offers a structured framework that makes it very clear where various linguistic processes take place. Human language, in Coseriu's view, can be regarded as having three levels or planes of manifestation. Firstly, it is a universal human activity, namely the general ability of any human being of producing speech. At the universal level, the relation between language and the extra-linguistic world is represented by

designation, and the adequacy of the linguistic product – basically the infinite totality of utterances – is judged based on its congruence with the outside world. The universal ability of producing speech cannot however materialize unless it takes the concrete form of a particular language. The second level of language is thus that of historical languages, which operates with significations that are evaluated in terms of correctness. Except for the case of grammar books or dictionaries, historical languages do not exist "as such," but they are always produced by individuals, in particular situations. The third language level, the individual one, takes textual meaning as its content and the linguistic product – individual speech – is judged in terms of its adequacy to the context in which it is produced (Coseriu, "Linguistic Competence" xxvii-xxix).

Eugenio Coseriu defines the act of translating as:

> speech with a virtually identical content in two different languages. We do not translate languages, but speech and utterances . . . . we do not translate significations, but what is designated by means of significations . . . . There is no direct transposition from the significations in the source language onto the significations of the target language; the way necessarily goes through the extralinguistic designata. That is why translation is first de-construction (*Entsprachlichung*) through language followed by a re-construction (*Versprachlichung*) through language. (Coseriu, "Semn" 17, translation mine)

Coseriu's definition of translation offers one of the clearest descriptions of the process itself, as well as of the actual 'content' that is being translated. In the specific case of Japanese and English/Romanian – and having in mind the research question I start from – I will try to compare the 'speech' that surfaces onto the target languages, after a brief insight into the extralinguistic designata pertaining to the two cultural spaces. In other words, I will use Coseriu's outlook as theoretical background for the analysis of my examples in an attempt to de-construct the re-constructed language in order to get to the level of the extralinguistic realm, namely to those aspects with a high cultural load: "The main role of translation is . . . to designate the same state of things by means of a different language" (Coseriu, "Lo erróneo" 222, translation mine). As Emma Tămâianu explains, these means, which are the significations of the target language, should be understood "as being part of "culture" as anchorage points for

potential networks of evocative relations" (Tămâianu, *Fundamentele* 145, translation mine). Furthermore, Tămâianu claims that the textual designata are not actually a product – the target of the translation process, but that equating the designata in translation actually means equating the process of building the designata in the source text. Since significations are not merely instruments in the process of translation, the translation process will be an attempt to represent in the target text the network and function that they have in the source text (Tămâianu, *Fundamentele* 147). Coseriu lists several strategies used in equating the designata in translation: creation of equivalences (new significations and new expressions in the target language), adoption, adaptation, analytical explanation of the significations of the source language, comment or clarification (the latter, outside the text or in the text of the translation itself: thus, instead of simply saying "Jupiter," the translator can say "the god Jupiter" if he thinks that the recipients are missing this information) (Coseriu, "Lo erróneo" 235). Clarification is especially relevant for this analysis, since I will show later in the article that translators of Japanese texts frequently use it, either in the form of footnotes or as part of the actual text. What interests me in particular is to compare the degree that clarification reaches in English and Romanian texts and to explain the differences thus arising based on the importance of context in the two languages.

"To translate means to make available," says Bogdan Ghiu (35), but when applied to my analysis, this statement embeds a question: "available to whom?" Do the readers from one cultural space expect or request that a translation match their deep structure that had been constructed within the culture they belong to? According to E. A. Nida, the answer is necessarily affirmative:

> But the process of arriving at a fully intelligible understanding of a text may depend not only on the words of an entire text, but also on what the author evidently considered to be the knowledge and concerns of his or her intended audience. Similarly, a translator must ultimately reckon with the presuppositions of those who are supposed to understand a translation. Translators are always juggling several balls at the same time. (58)

When it comes to a categorization of cultural spaces, Japan is usually referred to as "the East," while both Romania and the English-speaking

countries (mainly USA and Great Britain) are included in "the West." But how homogenous is "the West" and how much does a translated text fill the slots of culturally-loaded expectations that the readers inevitably have?

On Translation Principles, Strategies and Techniques

Translation theoreticians make a distinction between translation principles, strategies, methods and techniques and there are ample discussions of the various categorizations. However, for the purpose of this study, Kinga Klaudy's view contains relevant information. Klaudy enumerates three major principles of translation: the principle of adequacy to the norms of the target language and culture, the principle of explicitation and the principle of translation norms (qtd. in Nagy 108-109). The principle of adequacy to the norm of the target language and culture refers to the attempt to meet the target culture readers' expectations, adapting the text to be translated to the norms and the socio-cultural horizon that they have. The principle of explicitation, based on Shoshana Blum-Kulka's explicitation hypothesis,[i] means that, from several possibilities, the translator will generally choose that solution which is the most explicit and explanatory. Therefore, the translated text is usually longer, more explicit and explanatory, even more redundant than the source text. Lastly, the principle of translation norms refers to the translators' obeying a set of translation solutions having linguistic and stylistic characteristics that are generally accepted and that are operational in a given historical period.

For the issue under consideration here, I find the principles of adequacy and of explicitation particularly relevant. In the texts that are the object of analysis for the present article, there are quite numerous examples of cultural adaptation, where the translators sometimes choose culture or language-specific items instead of the original options. As for explicitation, I find that generally Blum-Kulka's hypothesis stands, but the degree of explicitation is usually different in English as compared to Romanian.

The general principles of translation refer to the overall approach and govern various translation methods and techniques. The methods or the strategies of translation work at the macro-textual level, while the translation techniques tackle with the micro-textual level. The number of

the strategies and techniques of translation vary depending on the classification referred to, but a detailed discussion on this topic does not fall within the aim and scope of the present article. However, while the translation principles, methods and techniques used by translators are more or less the same, the degree to which they are applied is different depending on the type of cultural space.

On Cultural Context

The general perspective on culture is often correlated to the geographical position of the corresponding countries and nations. However, the differences and/or the similarities between cultures cannot be explained by resorting to geography alone. In *Beyond Culture*, Edward T. Hall proposes a perspective based on the role that the broader cultural context plays in determining the way in which a particular society functions. His well-known distinction between high-context cultures and low-context cultures proves extremely useful for us in explaining the different outcomes of the translation of a Japanese text into English and Romanian.

In Hall's view, culture provides a selective screen between man and the outside world, the culture that we belong to functioning as a filter that selects the aspects we take into account and the aspects we ignore in our interactions. This process is possible due to the contexting of the individual, as people who have shared the same cultural context do not need to spell out every single aspect that must be taken into account in the course of interaction or communication. On the other hand, there are cultural spaces where even the minutest details are explicitly stated, since by not doing so, successful communication cannot be attained.

Hall proposes a distinction between high-context cultures and low-context cultures, with Japan as a typical representative of the high-context end and German-speaking countries as representatives of the low-context end of the scale. What is important to remember is that Hall's distinction is not a clear-cut dichotomy and that high-context cultures and low-context cultures are not opposites, but rather extreme points on a continuum which includes areas where the two perspectives are actually intertwined. Hall himself gives the example of the Japanese high-context society, where two

different frameworks which coexist in the life of Japanese individuals can be identified: a high-context one – which begins at home in childhood and which emphasizes the need to be close – and a low-context one – which is activated in public and during ceremonial occasions and which emphasizes self-control, distance and hiding inner feelings.

Although Hall's theory focuses mainly on interaction and communication in everyday life, it can be easily applied in explaining the choices that the authors – through the narrators and the characters in literary works – make in the process of writing and, consequently, the choices that translators make in the process of translation. Furthermore, the examples analysed below come from novels, a literary genre that allows for linguistic representations which are closer to real-life interactions and communication – from an interpersonal perspective, as well as to the inner thoughts of the character – from an intrapersonal perspective.

English vs. Romanian Translations of the Same Japanese Texts: A Contrastive View

In view of the theoretical aspects presented above, let us look at some concrete examples where the source text goes into slightly different directions in the two languages under consideration.

One of the most striking examples that I encountered comes from the adaptation and/or localization of the Japanese specific realities. In such cases, either the entire reference has been changed so that it becomes instantly recognizable by the Anglophone readers, or the translator chose to use expressions that are more familiar to said readers, posing problems in understanding to readers coming from other cultures. For example, in *If Cats Disappeared from the World*, the protagonist is asked by the Devil to make a list of 10 things he wants to do before he dies. The entries include things such as "Go skydiving" or "Climb Mt. Everest," which have been preserved as such. However, "ナウシカとデート" (17) (lit. "dating Nausicaa"[ii]) becomes "Go on a date with Princess Leia" (11). Although the strong connection between Nausicaa and Princess Leia is undeniable,[iii] the choice of the translator will probably limit the deep understanding of the message to the connoisseurs. For the ordinary reader (to whom the novel is

addressed), what is gained is the familiarity with the character and the idea of fictophilia, but what is lost is exactly the Japanese specificity, including the idea of fictophilia for anime characters, not for cinematographic characters played by human actors. In the Romanian version, I chose to preserve Nausicaa, especially since Miyazaki's character is quite well-known already, but, on the suggestion of the editor, I included a footnote with a short explanation. A similar situation occurred with another entry in the list, ガンダムに乗る (17) (lit. "ride a Gundam"), translated as "Take a ride on a Transformer's back" (11) in English – with a clear reference to the *Transformers* series. In Romanian, the name Gundam was retained, accompanied by explanations in a footnote. So, in these particular cases, the result of the translation was that, both in English and in Romanian, the original text, which made reference to a context that did not need any explanation for the Japanese readers, was made explicit, but in different ways: through adaptation and localization in English and through explanations in a footnote in Romanian.

In the same list of 10 things to do before dying, there is an entry that says 世界の中心で愛をさけぶ (17) (lit. "crying out love in the center of the world"). The English translation reads "Find love in these final Days of Our Lives" (11), employing the title of a well-known American series and changing the verb completely. The Japanese sentence is actually the name of Japanese TV drama based on a book, and I can see that the strategy of the translator is again to preserve the idea – of using the title of a well-known cinematographic production – but to adapt and localize it for the Anglophone readers. Once again, the strategy for the Romanian translation was to provide a footnote with additional explanations.

The use of abbreviations and acronyms is another example of such adaptations. English is especially open to the use of acronyms, some of which have been adopted internationally, particularly in the field of international business (such as ASAP, TBC, OT etc.). In the following fragment from *There's No Such Thing as an Easy Job*, I encounter the use of a very specific acronym in the translated text, acronym that does not appear in the original Japanese version. Furthermore, the use of the acronym is combined with the explicitation of a deictic expression, adding extra details that in the Japanese version remain untold: すみません、あ

あすみません、そちらのほうが、こうしたいぐらいですよね (331) (lit. "I'm sorry, ah, I'm sorry, it is you that almost wish to do like that") / "I'm sorry. I'm really and truly sorry. You must have been wishing you could go AWOL yourselves with all the stress" (383). Although the Romanian version also adds some explanatory details, it does not go as far as to employ the use of acronyms: "Îmi pare rău. Îmi pare foarte rău. Probabil că v-am adus până într-acolo încât v-ați dori să fi făcut și dumneavoastră la fel." (lit. "I'm sorry. I'm very sorry. I probably got you to a point where you wish you have done (things) in the same way").

However, such cases of adaptation are not so numerous and could rather be considered extreme choices of the translators or editors. What occurs much more frequently is over-specification, both at the level of grammatical constructions and at the textual level, in an attempt to make the context clearer for the English-speaking reader who needs explicit messages. Let us look at several examples from *There's No Such Thing as an Easy Job*.

One of the most common forms of explicitation is the insertion of an explicit subject in English, where there is none in Japanese. The reason is purely grammatical, as in English the subject must always be expressed. It is interesting, though, that sometimes the subject inferred from the context is different from what one would expect by reading the Japanese original text. For example, in the following fragment, there is no reference to "hand" whatsoever, but the translator creates a very concrete visual image by inserting the subject "my hand":

> 私は、クリップボードに挟まれた1区の地図の、「田所」というところに、少し迷ったあげく、よそのポスターを意味する「ポ」という字を書き込む。(197)
>
> (Lit. "After giving much thought to the place named "Tadokoro" on section 1 on the map clipped on the clipboard, I filled in the letter 'Po' meaning foreign poster.")
>
> My hand hovered above the house marked as Tadokoro in the Block One section of the map on my clipboard before I eventually wrote 'P' to signify the presence of a foreign poster. (233)

For the Romanian version, I preferred to render the situation described by the construction *mayotta ageku* by resorting to an expression referring to the mental process of repeatedly deciding something and then changing one's mind about it, with the grammatical subject not overtly expressed, but included in the verb ending: "Am scos foaia cu harta pentru Cartierul 1 pe care o aveam în clipboard și, după ce m-am tot gândit și răzgândit, am scris în dreptul numelui Tadokoro un 'P' pentru a indica prezența unui poster străin." (lit. "I took out the sheet with the Block One map that was on the clipboard and, after thinking and changing my mind several times, I wrote a 'P' next to the name Tadokoro to indicate the presence of a foreign poster").

Among other grammatical constructions that are explicitly explained, I find the *~n desu* construction or verbs of giving and receiving. In Japanese, the *~n desu* construction has an explanatory or confirmatory function itself, but the information it encompasses is left unsaid, being retrieved from the context by the interlocutor. It can also be used as an emphasis, which is the case in the following sentence: 私、ほんとに今週から働き始めたんですけれども (210) (lit. "Actually, I have just started working [+justification/explanation] this week, [softener]"). The English translation reads: "I only started this week, so I'm very new to all this…" (246), where the "so I'm very new to all this" is an explicitation of the said construction that does not appear as such in the Japanese version.

Grammatical constructions such as constructions with auxiliary verbs of giving and receiving are also explained. The construction *V-te moraimasu* is used to express receiving a favour and an example such as これが今季のポスターで、約半年貼ってもらいます (194) (lit. "This (is) the poster for this season, (and) [we] get the favour of having it stuck for about half a year") was translated as: "These are the newest posters, which we'll be asking people to keep up for about six months" (229).

In both cases, for the Romanian translation I also chose to paraphrase the meaning of the grammatical constructions, as it brings nuances that would otherwise be lost, even though by paraphrasing the sentences became longer and heavier: "Abia m-am angajat, deci aș putea să fac atâta lucru" (lit. "I have just been employed, so I could do that much"), respectively "Acestea sunt posterele din acest sezon și vom apela la bunăvoința

oamenilor ca să rămână afișate aproximativ o jumătate de an" (lit. "These are this season's posters and we will appeal to people's kindness so that they stay posted approximately half a year").

Aside from inserting the subject and explaining the meaning of some grammatical constructions, probably the phenomenon that occurs most often is that of explaining the context by inserting phrases and sentences that do not appear in the original text at all.

Going back to the list of 10 things to do before you die that I referred to earlier in the article, the last item on the list says 恋がしたい… (17) (lit. "I want to fall in love"). However, the English version goes much further than the simple desiderative statement, by addressing the reader directly and adding quite a large amount of extra information for a more dramatic effect: "Did I mention I'd like to fall in love? Just once . . ." (11).

I will further illustrate this strategy with several examples taken from *There's No Such Thing as an Easy Job*.

When the main character gets a job as a copywriter at a biscuit production factory, she is supposed to write new texts that will appear on the back of the packages. In this context, the sentence 袋が変わったことに気付いた (150) (lit. "I noticed that the package has changed") becomes "I noticed there's a new series on the back!" (181), the word 袋 (package) being replaced by a phrase that actually describes what is on the back of the package (some series of texts on various topics), around which the story of the chapter revolves.

In the same chapter, I find that the protagonist gives the texts to her lunchmates to read before submitting them to the director of the company for approval. She is grateful for the fact that they are so interested in the content that they almost stop working when they read the packages and that the other people are envious of them for that:

> 昼ごはん仲間で、検品を担当している二瓶さんと浦川さんが、袋裏を読んでいたら仕事の手が止まりそうになっちゃった、などと言ってくれたり、他のラインの人がそれをうらやましがってくれたり... ありがたかった (150)
>
> (lit. "I was grateful that Ms. Nihei and Ms. Urakawa, my lunchmates in charge of product inspection made me the favour of telling me that when

> reading the back of the package they almost stopped working and that other people working on the line made me the favour of being envious of that"). (180)

However, in the English translation, the object of the co-workers' envy is clearly specified:

> My lunchmates responsible for product inspection, Mrs. Nihei and Mrs. Urakawa, told me that they'd been so engrossed in reading the backs that they'd barely got any work done, and that they'd been the envy of all the others on the line for getting the first look at the new packaging. (180)

The last example in this category comes from the use of a deictic expression used anaphorically, but which is clearly explained in the English translation, making the fragment much clearer, but at the same time limiting the readers' interpretations:

> にゅうめんの色のような抑えたベージュ色で統一された、シンプルでおしゃれな内装に、フランス語の唄が流れているような、庶民的なこの近所と同じ町内とは思えないようなおしゃれな空間なのだが、. . . こういう場所に貼られてもあまり違和感はない。(209)

> (lit. "Made uniform by a calm beige colour like the *nyūmen*, with a simple and elegant interior design and a French song playing, it is a space so elegant that one cannot think [it is] that same town as the ordinary neighborhood . . . Even posted in such a place, [they] do not really seem out of place.")

> With its simple, tasteful interior in light beige that recalled the colour of noodles, and soft French music playing in the background, it seemed implausibly stylish for a neighborhood like this one. . . . Even in a spot as well designed as this, they didn't look out of place. (246)

All of the examples illustrating the explicitation of the context have been translated into Romanian closely following the Japanese original text, without adding any extra information for clarification, as follows:

Japanese	Romanian translation	English literal translation of the Romanian version
恋がしたい…	Vreau să mă îndrăgostesc. (14)	"I want to fall in love."
袋が変わったことに気付いた	Am observat că ambalajul s-a schimbat.	I noticed that the package has changed.
昼ご飯の仲間で、検品を担当している二瓶さんと浦川さんが、袋裏を読んでいたら仕事の手が止まりそうになっちゃった、などと言ってくれたり、他のラインの人がそれをうらやましがってくれたり．．．ありがたかった	Tovarășele mele de la masa de prânz, doamna Nihei și doamna Urakawa, mi-au spus că fuseseră atât de absorbite de lectura textelor de pe ambalaje, încât aproape nu-și mai făcuseră treaba și că toți ceilalți colegi de pe linia de producție le invidiau.	My lunchmates, Ms. Nihei and Ms. Urakawa, told me that they had been so absorbed by reading the texts on the packages that they almost did not do their job and all the other colleagues on the production line envied them.
にゅうめんの色のような迎えたベージュ色で統一された、シンプルでおしゃれな内装に、フランス語の唄が流れているような、庶民的なこの近所と同じ町内とは思えないようなおしゃれな空間なのだが、．．．こういう場所に貼られてもあまり違和感わない。	Cu un interior simplu și elegant, într-un bej ce amintea de culoarea tăițeilor, și cu o muzică franțuzească în fundal, părea că nu aparține deloc acestui cartier de altfel deloc pretențios. . . . Și chiar și într-un asemenea loc, afișele realizate de domnul Morinaga se încadrau perfect în peisaj.	With a simple and elegant interior, in a beige that reminded of the colour of the noodles and with a French music in the background, it seemed that it didn't belong at all to this otherwise unpretentious neighborhood . . . . And even in such a place, the posters made by Mr. Morinaga fit perfectly into the background.

So far, we have looked at examples that support the hypothesis that English translations generally make use of more strategies and techniques than the Romanian translations to render the text more explicit than the original Japanese one, thus illustrating the need for specifying as many

elements of the context as possible, a characteristic of low-context cultures. Let us now turn to another feature of communication in various cultures, namely the directness vs. the indirectness of communication.

In quite a number of cases, I noticed that the English translation replaces interrogatives or desideratives with imperatives, thus creating a much stronger effect of direct communication with the reader. For example, one of the series of texts to appear on the back of the biscuit packages in the story of *There's No Such Thing as an Easy Job* is called 知っていますか？　あなたの漢字 (151) (lit. "Do you know? Your kanji"). In English, however, it is rendered as "Know Your Name!" (181), which is more forceful and more direct than the question in the Japanese version. In the Romanian translation, I preserved the question format. An example using a desiderative construction comes from *If Cats Disappeared from the World*: くだらない妄想だ、とあなたは思うかもしれない。でも信じて欲しい (6) (lit. "You might think it's a silly fantasy. But I want you to believe [it]"). In English the desiderative expression is eliminated altogether, the translator using only the imperative element: "OK, so you're probably thinking this is all a bit silly, but please, believe me" (1).

Even when an imperative is used in Japanese, it is an inclusive one, as opposed to the exclusive imperative in English, as we can see in this example from *There's No Such Thing as an Easy Job*: 熱中症予防　よくお水を飲みましょう (196) (lit. "Let's drink water often to prevent heatstroke") becomes "Drink Plenty of Water to Prevent Heatstroke!" (231).

Conclusions

When a text in a certain language is translated into another language, what is being translated is not only the language, but also the culture. As Coseriu puts it – cited earlier in the article – it is not the words of the language that are being translated, but their designata, which are not to be found in the language, but in the extralinguistic environment. Although I have briefly touched on the issue, this article does not focus, however, on the difficulties of translating words and expressions that designate culture-specific realities, but on the linguistic choices made by the translators/ editors to express common designations from ordinary life. I have looked at the way

in which the reality expressed by the Japanese text is reconstructed in English and Romanian and I have noticed that the English translation is generally more explicit and loaded with context-specifying elements, at the same time having the tendency to employ strategies that make the discourse more direct. The Romanian version, on the other hand, follows more closely the Japanese original text, the need for explicit specification of context details being less visible than in the case of English, which is consistent with the high-context culture / low-context culture dichotomy. While both the Anglophone space(s) and the Romanian one are considered as 'the West' when compared to Japan, thus being included in the low-context culture area, with its need to spell out explicitly as many details of the context as possible and have a direct way of communicating things, if we look at the two translations contrastively, we can say that the degree of explicitation and directness is not the same, the Romanian one showing more signs of a high-context culture type of discourse than the English one.

The findings of this study must be seen, however, in light of some limitations. First of all, the number of texts that have been analysed is very limited, a more diverse range of authors – and translators – being desirable for a better understanding of the phenomenon. That is true especially in the case of the Romanian translations analysed here, which are the product of the same translator. Furthermore, the study was restricted to prose/novels and it would be relevant to see whether the same tendencies surface in poetry as well.[iv] And lastly, for a more solid demonstration that the style of a translation is based on the characteristics of either a low-context or a high-context culture, it would be useful to consider translations into other languages as well. In the future, I intend to continue this study, extending it to more authors and genres.

Notes:

[i] Introduced by Shoshana Blum-Kulka, the explicitation hypothesis claims that "The process of interpretation performed by the translator on the source text might lead to a target language text which is more redundant than the source language text. This redundancy can be expressed by a rise in the level of cohesive explicitness in the target language text. This argument may be stated as «the explicitation hypothesis», which postulates an observed cohesive explicitness from source language to target language texts regardless of the increase traceable

to differences between the two linguistic and textual systems involved. It follows that explicitation is viewed here as inherent in the process of translation" (Blum-Kulka 19).

[ii] All the literal translations from Japanese and Romanian into English are mine.

[iii] Heavily influenced by the movies of Akira Kurosawa, George Lucas's *Star Wars* also had a reverse effect, highly influencing Japanese anime. Hayao Miyazaki's *Nausicaa of the Valley of Wind has many common points with Star Wars, including some elements of the story and specific features of some characters.*

[iv] In an article analyzing Japanese translations of "Song of Myself" by Walt Whitman (Tămâianu-Morita, "Over-specification"), Tămâianu-Morita concludes that the Japanese texts are characterized by over-specification – be it lexical, grammatical or stylistic. The reasons pertain both to the typological characteristics of Japanese and to subjective choices made by the translators in order to clarify the text. Given the specificity of cultural types, we would expect the opposite, with the Japanese version 'leaving things unsaid' and relying on the context. The outcome is actually in line with the principle of explicitation referred to earlier in the article, but the matter is worth further examining to see whether the over-specification was an isolated example in the case of Whitman's poems or it surfaces in translations from other poets as well.

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