

Englund Dimitrova, Birgitta: *Expertise and Explication in the Translation Process*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2005. Benjamins Translation Library Volume 64. ISBN 90 272 1670 3. xv + 295 pages.

This book essentially reports on an empirical case study, namely the translation with TAP, computer-logging and video-recording of a text by 9 subjects. The source text describes the life of a Ukrainian artist and poet and contains several segments with implicit logical links which can, but need not be explicated (this non-standard word is used throughout the book) in the Swedish translation (p.7). The author says the study focuses on explication of these logical links, but only chapter 5 focuses on explication, and the book is interesting in many other respects.

After an introductory chapter 1, a rich and informationally dense chapter 2 sets the theoretical framework for the study. The author refers to translation competence under a cognitive viewpoint and to previous translation process studies, with a good summary of existing findings. She then introduces and discusses interestingly the psychological concept of expertise, and moves on to cognitive models of the translation process, then to the definition of segments as the individual translator's units of translation, operationally characterized as translation segments produced without pauses (p.29). In a further section, she explains her focus on explication, lists 28 publications in the TS literature which present evidence of explication phenomena, and following Klaudy, proposes a distinction between mandatory and optional explication. She then takes up translation norms, which she hopes to detect through TAP verbalizations. In a final and short section, she introduces her main research question: how do quantitative differences in translation experience correlate with postulated main cognitive translation processes and with the way implicit logical links in the ST are dealt with in the TT?

Chapter 3 presents the method implemented, starting with a serious methodological discussion of pros and cons of various options, and refers to findings in the literature in this respect. It then moves on to the methods adopted: 2 senior professional translators and 2 younger professional translators, 2 translation students and 3 students of Russian were asked to translate a short Russian text into Swedish, their native language. Subjects were instructed to translate at their own leisure, at home or in Englund-Dimitrova's office, using their usual sources for documentation. They were told to verbalize their thoughts and to write their translation on a computer equipped with a logging software. They were also videotaped during their work and interviewed afterwards. While there

is no particular innovation in the approach or in the use of several methods at the same time, the methodological discussion and the care taken to make the operation as ecologically valid as possible are commendable.

Chapter 4 presents general findings, essentially the following:

1. All students spent considerably more time on the task than professionals
2. With respect to the number of segments (translation runs without pauses) in which the translation work was done, there was considerable variation. Only senior professionals stand out.
3. On the number of characters per segment, only senior professionals stand out.

Points 2 and 3 are interesting in showing that reaching expert status takes much time, not just a couple of years. One implication is that students should not be expected upon graduation to be as efficient as seasoned professionals.

4. Facilitation effect: the number of segments required to write the second half of the translation was smaller than the number of segments required to write the first half.
5. All professionals started by writing a literal translation as the first step, then revising the target text.

This is a non-trivial, interesting result, which goes against some powerful ideas about the “proper” way to translate. It may and may not be representative of Russian-into-Swedish translation strategies, it may be found more often in certain language pairs or in certain types of source texts, where comprehension requires rather intensive use of attentional resources, but it may also be a general tendency.

Chapter 5 focuses on findings with respect to explicitation:

1. A strong general tendency towards adding connectives
2. A positive correlation between an explicating strategy for contrastive relations and experience
3. The data do not suggest that temporal and causal links are explicitated with connectives.
4. Professionals tend to explicitate earlier than students.

Other perhaps less fundamental but interesting observations include the following:

1. Most subjects said they preferred working with paper printouts; this does challenge ecological validity of experiments such as this one and may require further thought.
2. Most subjects expressed in their verbalizations the idea that the target text in Swedish should be readable and easy to understand. This definitely expresses

a norm. It would be interesting to find out where this norm is taken from: formal training, TS literature, reactions from senior translators or customers, etc.

3. The stylistic norm of repetition avoidance seems to have been very strong.
4. Three out of 4 professionals said that in the experiment, they did not work as usual. Again, a challenge to ecological validity.
5. Quite a few subjects said in their verbalizations that at some point in their process, they did not know anymore what was Russian and what was Swedish; this is a strong manifestation of language interference, perhaps related to the simultaneous presence in working memory of both languages during translation. This matter also deserves further investigation.

Chapter 6 sums up the findings and discusses their implications carefully, in a way which shows the author's awareness of variability observed, of the fact that the sample was very small and that it could not be considered representative in the statistical sense. Englund Dimitrova points out that she did not find a strong link between translation experience and one particular way of doing translation. She concludes that perhaps in translator training, one should not teach one specific way of doing translation, but rather aim at raising the students' awareness of their individual approaches and invite them to try out more than one approach. From her finding that subjects in her sample mostly worked on short chunks of texts, both in production and in revision, she draws the conclusion that students should be encouraged to practice generating several translations of the same ST chunk and to practice not only with whole texts and sentences, but also with short chunks.

The book contains 3 appendices, presenting the source text in Russian, the subjects' target language versions and TT versions analyzed in chapter 5 respectively, as well as a combined name and thematic index.

One central question that arises in connection with this study as with many other investigations in the literature is whether it is possible to generalize from the comparison of samples of 2 people (and one sample of 3 people). Statisticians would probably be inclined to say that the small size of the samples can only lead to provisional questions and hypotheses. The author is aware of the fact, but draws conclusions, albeit tentatively, in her last chapter. Perhaps such conclusions were a strong expectation from such an amount of work invested in the study, whatever the size of the sample.

Another central question is that of ecological validity. Despite Englund Dimitrova's careful consideration of the issues, the professional subjects' reactions suggest that at least in their perception of the experiment, it was not quite the same as their usual professional work. Perhaps less intrusive methods will

have to be developed. Could one consider cooperation with commercial translation departments who would agree to add a “research clause” to employment contracts with their translators, whereby these would accept to be video-taped and/or computer-logged during their work? Technology now makes it possible to install small cameras inconspicuously, and after a while, translators could be assumed to have lost any self-consciousness and to work as usual. This would require interest in research on the part of employers as well as strong ethical rules and mechanisms to preserve the translators’ privacy and interests, not an easy task, but perhaps a possibility. After all, in many international organizations, the conference interpreters’ output is recorded, and interpreters accept this, though not enthusiastically.

On the whole, the book is informative, written clearly - with some weaknesses, for instance the lack of information on how video-tapes were used or the unclear use of the word “occasions” (p.79, 86) - and reflects a thorough, careful, honest approach to research, which is very gratifying for a critical reader. There are a few problems with the rationale, the processing of data and inferencing. For instance, segmentation was defined with pauses of at least 5 seconds (p.97). Why not try out 3, 4, 6 or 7 seconds and see whether patterns are similar or different? This would be technically easy with the logging software and a natural step for researchers familiar with empirical studies relying on threshold values. On page 88, the author speaks of a relatively low proportion of time spent on the writing phase; is this statement justified when 6 subjects out of 9 spend more than 50% of the time on writing, and all but one more than 39% of their time? On pages 188-189, the author expresses the view that the automated nature of an action makes it likely that it is norm-governed; why should that necessarily be? Finally, from her finding that there are several process profiles, the author draws the bold conclusion that they should not be taught one specific way of approaching a translation task (p.242). Something is missing here: perhaps these process profiles yield consistently different output quality, in which case the one(s) associated with higher quality should be taught. As long as quality was not measured, the inference is not justified.

These are minor weaknesses when considered against all the careful reflection and writing found in the book, and could have been remedied rather easily. They do suggest that TS needs to build and implement a more rigorous refereeing process with respect to research design and inferencing, not only to ensure maximum quality for publications, but also for further training of TS scholars, but do not take away the pleasure of reading and learning from this book by a very serious scholar.

Daniel Gile