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Discourse production and translation

A cognitive approach to the (re)creation of rhetorical structure

Abstract

This study focuses on discourse production in translation. More specifically, it explores a much debated question in translation research, namely the extent to which translational discourse production may be considered as a merely derivative/reproductive activity, or rather as a special, complex activity that is a composite of both creative discourse production and reproduction. The problem is approached from a cognitive perspective and is investigated through a crucial aspect of discourse coherence, rhetorical structure (Mann and Thompson 1986), the example of news translation, and the case of the Hungarian and English language pair. Based on the findings of a corpus-based case study (Károly 2013), it is argued that (1) translational discourse production is not a purely derivative/reproductive process as it combines both creative/productive as well as reproductive activities and that (2) the degree to which the translator may be creative/productive in the process of translation depends on the aim and the function of the translation and the type and genre of the discourse translated. The paper concludes by the implications of the findings for the study of translation as text.
Keywords: translational discourse production, news translation, rhetorical structure theory, relational proposition

1   Introduction

This case study[1] focuses on discourse production in translation and explores a much debated question in translation research, namely the extent to which translational discourse production may be considered as merely discourse *reproduction*, or rather as a complex process involving both productive and reproductive features. The problem is approached from a cognitive perspective (de Beaugrande & Dressler 1981, Givón 2001a, 2001b, Kertész & Pelyvás 2005, Tolcsvai Nagy 2001) and is investigated through the case of a specific kind of translation (news translation) and genre (the news text), a given language pair and translation direction (Hungarian−English), and by focusing on one particular aspect of discourse coherence[2] (de Beaugrande & Dressler 1981, Andor 1989), the (re)production of rhetorical structure (Mann & Thompson 1986).

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[2]   The seven standards of textuality identified by de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) are cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality.

2   The stereotypical features of translational discourse production

The literature on translation research typically makes a clear distinction between translational and non-translational (i.e., original) discourse production. While original discourse production is generally viewed as a creative activity, translation is often labelled as a kind of "derivative", "secondary", "inferior" activity, which consists merely of the "reconstruction" of the source language text, and which is thus a "necessarily imperfect reproduction of the real thing" (Jakobsen 1993: 155).

There is considerable variation in the literature regarding the interpretation of the notion of translation. Stolze (2003) refers to it as a kind of "holistic text production", where the translator's task is to transmit the message as faithfully as possible to the target readers so that they can interpret and react to it adequately. Weissbrod (2005: 23) looks at translation as a kind of "transfer", i.e., sees the translator as "transferring" the text from one culture to another (for a different group of readers/receivers, at a different time, etc.). According to Neubert (1985: 18) and Neubert and Shreve (1992: 7), translation is basically source text induced target language discourse production.

One could endlessly carry on with examples illustrating the various approaches. The definition that best reflects the viewpoint represented in this study originates from de Beaugrande (1997), who devotes an entire chapter to the discourse-oriented description of translational discourse production. He considers translation as a "**functional, cognitive, and social activity of discourse**" (de Beaugrande 1997: 370) and thus looks at it, similarly to original discourse production, as a **communicative "event"** (de Beaugrande 1997, Fawcett 1997: 4, Nord 1997: 2). This also means that it needs to be analyzed accordingly, not as a combination of formal units (words or sentences).

As it is through text that we communicate, text production is always motivated by particular communicative purposes (de Beaugrande 1997, Givón 2001a, 2001b). After the formulation of the communicative purpose, the process of text production consists of two phases. In the first phase, the writer produces a "plan", in which a preliminary mental representation of the text is created (Tolcsvai Nagy 2001: 339). The plan is a schema, resulting from discoursal knowledge, which, in the case of written, therefore planned (not spontaneous) text production is complemented with a preliminary mental representation of the communicative purpose. This is followed by the second phase, during which, through a number of mental operations, the writer transforms the mental representation into a linguistic representation. The process is illustrated in Figure 1.
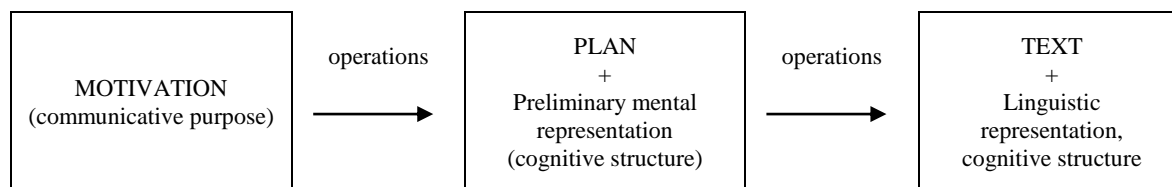

MOTIVATION (communicative purpose)	operations →	PLAN + Preliminary mental representation (cognitive structure)	operations →	TEXT + Linguistic representation, cognitive structure

Figure 1: Components of (original) text production

The translational situation multiplies the factors determining and influencing the process of discourse production. The translator enters the process who − based on an (original) text created in one language (in one particular culture, for one specific group of readers and with a given purpose) − produces another (translated) text in a different culture and for different readers, with a potentially different purpose, and guided by the norms of translation. The various factors that determine the translated text are summarized in Figure 2.

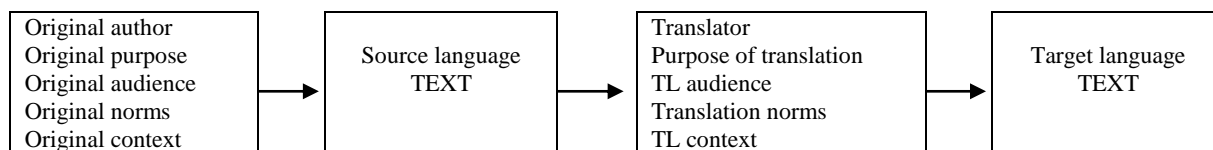| Original author Original purpose Original audience Original norms Original context	→	Source language TEXT	→	Translator Purpose of translation TL audience Translation norms TL context	→	Target language TEXT

Figure 2: Factors influencing the translation (based on Károly 2007: 43)

As a result of these factors, translational (target language) discourse production may be claimed to differ considerably from original discourse production. Here I do not aim to describe the whole translation process (including the process of source language text comprehension, as several sources give account of this: e.g., Neubert 1985, Neubert & Shreve 1992, Nord 1997); I will only concentrate on particular components of this process: target language discourse production and the characteristics of the ensuing text. The components of the process of translational discourse production are visualized in Figure 3.
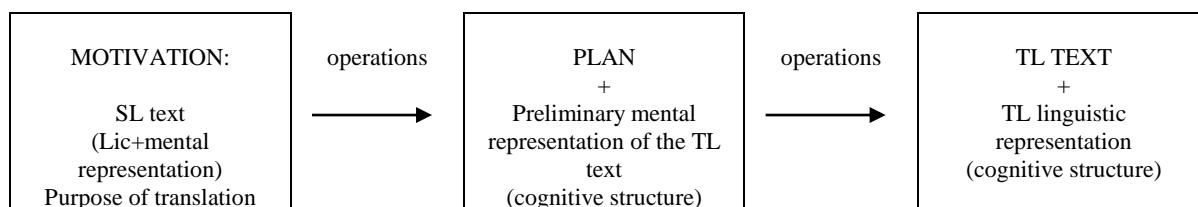
MOTIVATION: SL text (Lic+mental representation) Purpose of translation	operations →	PLAN + Preliminary mental representation of the TL text (cognitive structure)	operations →	TL TEXT + TL linguistic representation (cognitive structure)

Figure 3: Components of the process of translational text production
(Abbreviations: SL: source language; TL: target language; Lic: linguistic)

Three factors form the input of target language discourse production: (1) the source language text (as linguistic representation; linguistic dimension), (2) the mental representation formed in the mind of the translator on the basis of the linguistic representation of the source language text (i.e., the cognitive structure of the source language text, produced based on text comprehension; cognitive dimension), and (3) the purpose of translation (social, functional dimension). Based on these, in his/her mind, the translator – similarly to original text production – creates a plan, in which, as a result of particular mental operations, a preliminary general and cognitive structure of the target language text is formed. This general and cognitive structure may be identical with the mental representation formed on the basis of the source language text, but – and this is more probable – it may also be (partially) different as a result of the different linguistic system, translation purpose, translation norm, and the schema originating from target language and source language discourse knowledge. It is in this phase that certain plans are formed in the mind of the translator regarding the content-related, formal, stylistic, and rhetorical changes necessitated by the peculiarities of the two languages, cultures norms with regard to the given text type/genre. This is followed by the last phase of translational text production, when the translator transforms, via various mental operations, the preliminary general and cognitive structure of the target language text into a target language linguistic representation.

If translation is interpreted as a communicative and interactive event, the purpose and the function of translation become foregrounded as decisive factors in determining the method of translation. The translator decides to opt for, for instance, literal or free translation, to just mention the two extremes, on the basis of the purpose and the function of translation. Experience shows that both kinds of translations have limitations: in the case of literal translation the translator risks creating a "strange" text, in the case of free translation, on the

other hand, as a result of his/her intention to approach the target language norm as much as possible, the "equivalences" become less easily traced.

In his study on translation as text (re)production, Jakobsen (1993) shows that translation requires skills similar to original discourse production and needs a similar amount of effort. By approaching translation from a communicative, pragmatic perspective (see e.g., Vermeer's *skopos* theory[3] or Reiss and Vermeer's (1984) work on communicative translation), the culture- and situation-specific features of communication receive greater emphasis, and thus the translator needs to create a target language text that is capable of fulfilling its function. As a result, translations **are expected to function as independent, autonomous texts** and cannot show signs of having been produced via translation (Williams 2005: 124). In users' manuals or tourist brochures, for instance, the author or the translator of the text is often not even mentioned, only the name of the manufacturer or publisher appears. Translated texts as communicative events can only fulfil their functions if they are – using Jakobsen's (1993: 157) terms – "functional" and "natural", i.e., like original texts.

Translation is thus more than simply creating an "equivalent" target language text. Reiss and Vermeer (1984) use the term "Adäquatheit" to define the aim of communicative and functional translation. The translator's task, in their interpretation, is not to create perfect equivalence (covering all of the dimensions of the text), but to create an adequate target language text (considering the dimension of discourse relevant from the point of view of the aims of communication and translation) (see also Jakobsen 1993: 158). In this sense, translation is only regarded as adequate, if the target language text manages to reflect the relevant dimension of the source text. Adequacy therefore, in Reiss and Vermeer's view, is a broader concept than equivalence. If, in the case of equivalence, the task is to reflect not only one dimension but all of the dimensions, then an equivalent target language text will fulfil the criterion of adequacy. Consequently, equivalence may be regarded as a special case of adequacy. According to Reiss and Vermeer (1984), only communicative translation can yield target texts that are semantically, pragmatically and culturally appropriate, and comparable to original texts produced in the given (target) language. What all this boils down to is that the creation of complete textual equivalence is not necessarily a goal in translation (very often it is not even possible). A translation may be appropriate (adequate) even if it is not equivalent with the source text (see also Jakobsen 1993: 159).

This approach entails a shift of focus from the source language text (and source language text reproduction) to target language text production (in another language and for another audience). The **translator** is thus increasingly looked at **as the target text "author"**. Simultaneously, more attention is devoted to the rhetorical and communicative aspects of translations (including the relevant situation and socio-cultural context), as a result of which translators make certain pragmatic modifications, adjustments that help the target text fulfil its function and meet the expectations of the target audience. As translation always happens in a given cultural context, it entails "cultural translation", too. The various cultures do not only express themselves differently, they also create and use their concepts and texts differently. With all this in mind, it seems that **translation involves a considerable amount of original discourse production (too)**. In what follows, I will make an attempt to justify this statement through the in-depth analysis of a crucial element of discourse coherence, namely the recreation of rhetorical structure in translation.

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[3] The essence of Vermeer's theory is that the method of translation is defined by the function (=*skopos*) of the target language text.

3   The recreation of rhetorical structure in translation

3.1   *Mann and Thompson's Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST)*

According to Mann and Thompson's (1986) definition, a text is coherent if its parts "go together" (p.58). In their view, this quality of "going together," however, is not the result of "some" process (such as the alphabetical sorting of sentences), it is the consequence of the language user's ability to impose connectivity on disconnected parts of a visual image. They illustrate this with the following two sentence pairs:

(1)   a. I love to collect classic automobiles. My favourite car is my 1899 Duryea.
       b. I love to collect classic automobiles. My favourite car is my 1977 Toyota.

Although this example does not work very well in the 21st century, when a 1977 Toyota also counts as a "classic automobile", Mann and Thompson intend to demonstrate with it the incoherent nature of the second sentence pair. It is incoherent, because while in (a) the implicit proposition is that the instance of the generalization expressed in the first part is represented in the second part, the Duryea is a "classic automobile", the Toyota in (b) does not qualify for the same function. It is not regarded as a typical classic automobile (or at least it was not considered as one at the time when their paper was published). In (a), the relation – in Mann and Thompson's terminology the "relational proposition" – holding between the first and the second sentence is that of ELABORATION, because the text elaborates, further specifies the concept ("classic automobile") conveyed by the first part.

Mann and Thompson claim that **relational propositions** (RP) arise from two parts of a text, but are not independently derived from either of these parts: they are combinational phenomena, defined on two portions of a text. Thus people's perception of coherence in a given texts results from the way they can perceive these relations. Mann and Thompson (1986, 1988) and later, as a result of research involving several languages and text types, Mann (2005) comes up with a comprehensive, but not exhaustive list of as many as 32 RPs (Table 1).

Presentational relations	Subject matter relations	Multinuclear relations
ANTITHESIS BACKGROUND CONCESSION ENABLEMENT EVIDENCE JUSTIFY MOTIVATION PREPARATION RESTATEMENT SUMMARY	CIRCUMSTANCE CONDITION ELABORATION EVALUATION INTERPRETATION MEANS NON-VOLITIONAL CAUSE NON-VOLITIONAL RESULT *"OTHERWISE"* PURPOSE SOLUTIONHOOD UNCONDITIONAL *"UNLESS"* VOLITIONAL CAUSE VOLITIONAL RESULT	CONJUNCTION CONTRAST DISJUNCTION JOINT LIST MULTINUCLEAR RESTATEMENT SEQUENCE

Table 1: Presentational, subject matter and multinuclear relations (based on Mann 2005)

The aim of RST is to identify the hierarchic structure of texts through the investigation of RPs (i.e., unstated but inferred propositions that arise from the text structure in the process of interpreting texts). It describes the relations between text parts (clauses) in functional terms, identifying the transition point of a relation and the extent of the items related. The relations are defined to hold between two non-overlapping text spans, called the **nucleus** and the **satellite**, and they produce patterns which are called **schemas**. Schemas define the structural constituency arrangements of text: "they are abstract patterns consisting of a small number of constituent text spans, a specification of how certain spans (nuclei) are related to the whole collection" (Mann & Thompson 1988: 247). In other words, they determine the possible RST text structures. Diagram 1 demonstrates the phenomenon based on a text taken from the corpus of the current investigation: vertical lines show the nuclei, the arrows indicate the relation represented by the satellite.
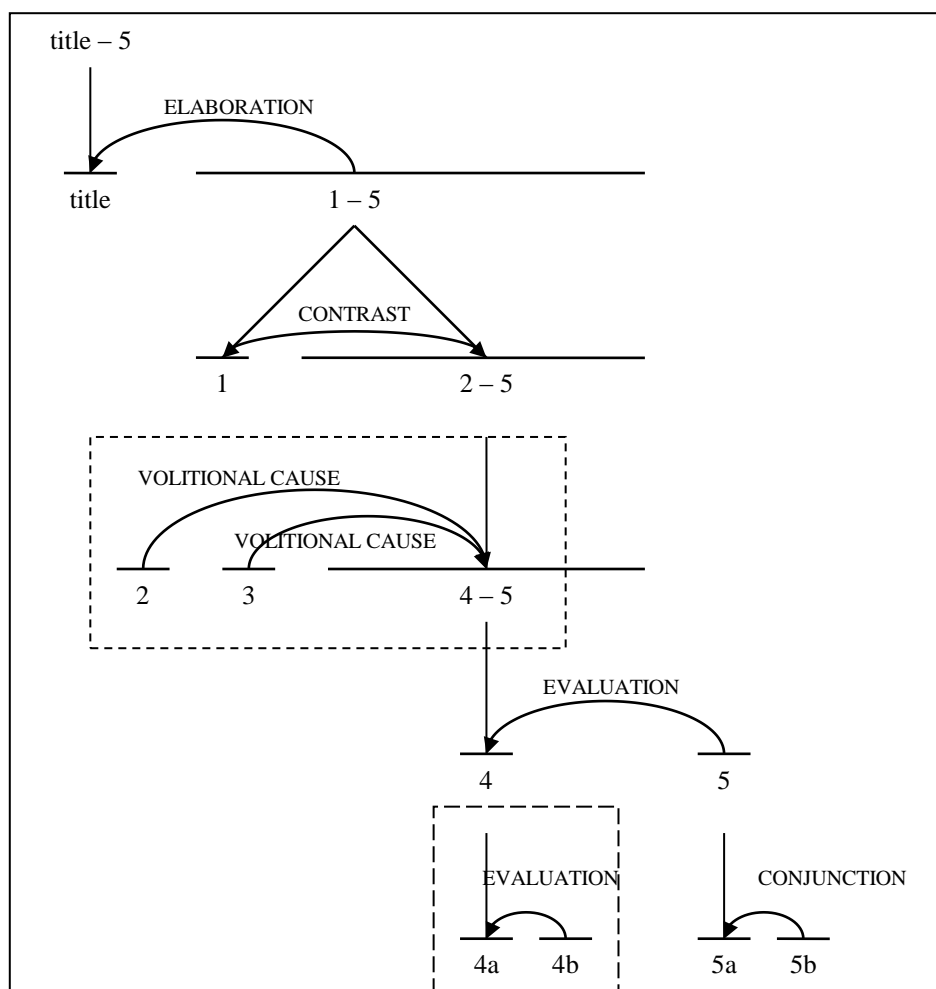

Diagram 1: The hierarchical rhetorical structure of a Hungarian source text (HST15) in the corpus

3.2 *Empirical justification: rhetorical structure and functional equivalence in Hungarian—English news translation*

The empirical study reported on here is built upon a corpus of Hungarian—English news texts. In what follows, I will refrain from the detailed presentation the methods and the findings of the analysis (these have been published in Károly 2013), and will focus only on the results that bear relevance from the point of view of the question under scrutiny here, namely translational discourse production as discourse production and/or reproduction.

The **corpus** is composed of the "summary" sections of translated English analytical news articles and their corresponding Hungarian originals retrieved from the website of *Budapest Analyses*, one of Hungary's internet based news magazines visited mainly by foreigners (including news agencies) within and beyond the country's borders. *Budapest Analyses*, as its name also suggests, publishes analytical articles on political, economic, financial, social and cultural events taking place in or related to Hungary. The corpus contains 20 Hungarian summaries and their English translations, altogether 40 texts (6658 words). The summaries have been randomly selected from the period between 2006−2009.

Interestingly, the study shows that the **main rhetorical function** characterizing the corpus (the relational proposition identifiable at the topmost level of the hierarchical rhetorical structure, i.e., the one connecting the title and the text) is in the vast majority of the cases ELABORATION (the texts typically elaborate on, provide further details about the topic mentioned in the title). As for the **entire rhetorical structure** of the texts, the corpus shows that translations differ from their sources both in terms of the quantity and in the quality of the relational propositions that constitute them: in the case of text 15 for example (presented in Diagram 1), out of the altogether 15 relational propositions, merely 5 are identical in the two texts (source and target) (Diagram 2 demonstrates the hierarchical rhetorical structure of the translation). Therefore it may be argued that **translation is accompanied by a considerable shift of rhetorical structure** in the current corpus. The following section will explore this statement in more depth through the example text 15.
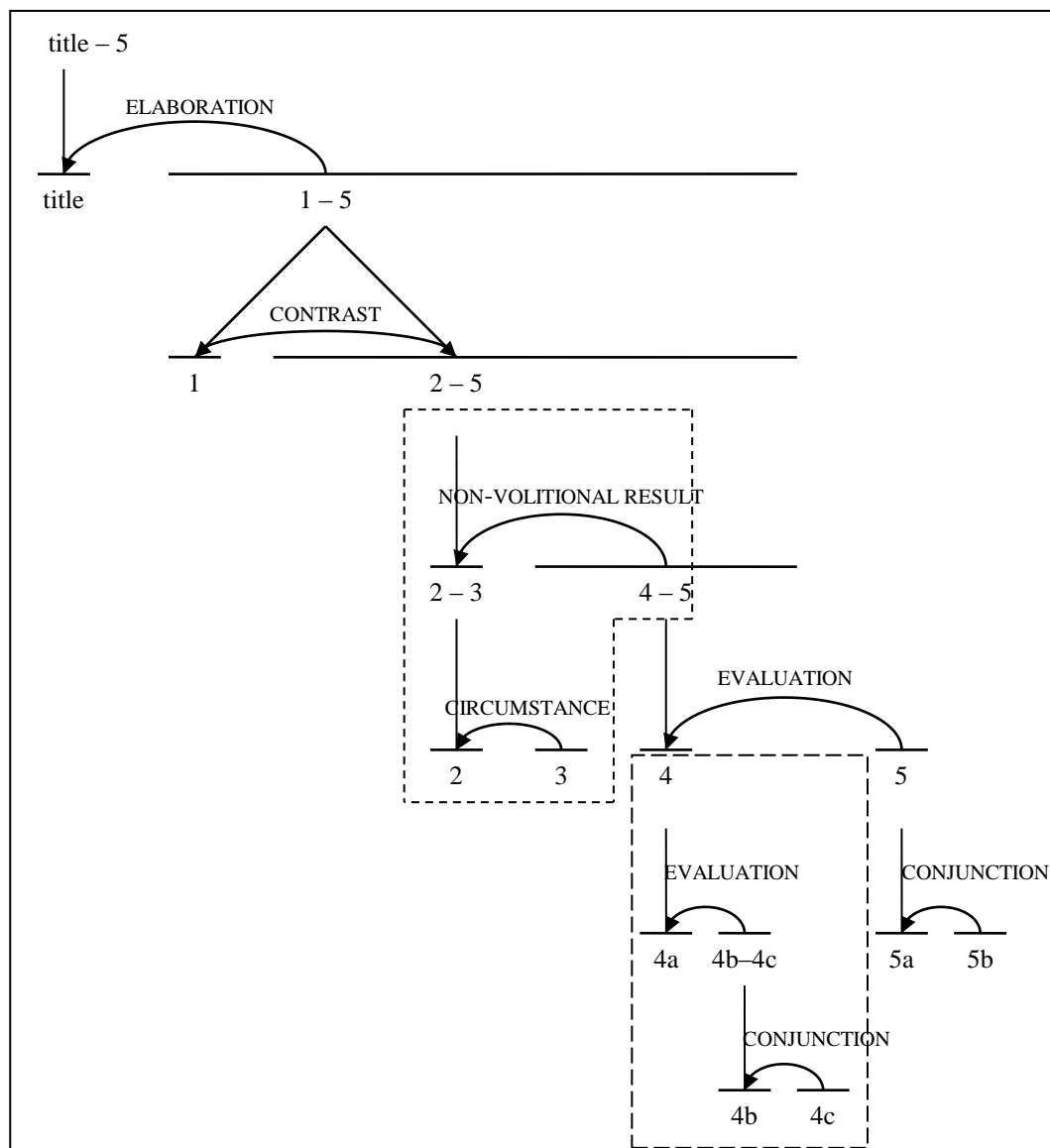
Diagram 2: The hierarchical rhetorical structure of the English translation (ETT15)

As Example 2 shows, as a result of the segmentation of the texts, five sentences (labelled by numbers) in both texts and, in the Hungarian source text (HST15) eight, while in the target text (ETT15) nine minimal units (clauses, labelled by the letters of the alphabet next to the sentence number) can be identified. Equivalent text spans are placed next to each other and conjunctions indicating logical relations (RPs) are italicized for ease of reference. As for sentence structure, one difference may be observed. In sentence 4, the sequence of the propositional contents of the clause is changed: the information presented in clause 4b in the source text is spread over two clauses (4c and 4b) and in a reversed order in the translation.

(2)   The segmentation of the Hungarian (HST15) and the English (ETT15) text into minimal units

Sentence or clause	HST15	Sentence or clause	ETT15
Title	Az egészségügy reformjának rögös útja	Title	The bumpy road of the healthcare reforms
1	A 2002-ben hivatalba lépett MSZP-SZDSZ koalíció első négy évében a magyar egészségügyi költségvetés kiadásainak aránya a GDP-n belül 4,3%-ról 5,1%-ra nőtt.	1	During the first four years of the MSZP-SZDSZ coalition that came to power in 2002, the Hungarian healthcare budgetary expenditure grew from 4.3% to 5.1% in proportion to the GDP.
2	A növekedést *azonban* nem kísérte az ellátás reformja.	2	*However*, this increase has not been accompanied by reforms.
3	*Másfelől* a koalíció költségvetési politikájának hibái folytán 2006 nyarára az államháztartás minden területén elodázhatatlanná váltak a komoly megszorítások.	3	By the summer of 2006 − due to the political blunders of the coalition − the introduction of wide scale austerity measures to every sphere of the fiscal budget became imminent.
4a	Az egészségügyi ellátás reformjára *ezért* a források szűkítésének idején kerül sor,	4a	*Hence*, the process of reforming the health service is simultaneously taking place with the drastic tightening of resources in several spheres,
4b	*ráadásul* ez egyszerre több területen, drasztikus lépésekben, a 2006-os választási ígéreteknek ellentmondva és hiteltelen kormányzati kommunikációval övezve történik.	4c	which contravenes the 2006 election promises *on the one hand*,
		4b	*and* is being communicated in an obscure manner by the government, *on the other*.
5a	Mindez alapvetően kikezdte a reform megvalósításához szükséges közbizalmat	5a	All these issues have shaken the foundations of public confidence needed for the implementation of reforms,
5b	*és* súlyosan megterheli mind a betegeket, mind az orvosokat.	5b	*as well as* encumber the sick and medical practitioners alike.

As Diagrams 1 and 2 show, in the Hungarian text altogether seven relations can be identified: one ELABORATION (title—S1-5), one CONTRAST (S1—S2-5), two VOLITIONAL CAUSES (S2—S4-5, S3—S4-5), two EVALUATIONs (S4—S5, S4a—S4b) and one CONJUNCTION (S5a—S5b). The diagram created on the basis of the English translation portrays a different structure. It includes nine clauses and eight relations: one ELABORATION (title—S1-5) and one CONTRAST (S1—S2-5), which coincide with what we have seen in the Hungarian text; one NON-VOLITIONAL RESULT (S2-3—S4-5), one CIRCUMSTANCE (S2—S3), which do not at all appear in the source text; and two EVALUATIONs (S4—S5, S4a—S4b), as in the source, and two CONJUNCTIONs (S5a—S5b). The boxes with the dotted lines in the diagrams indicate the changes resulting from differing clause structure (rare dots) and differing interpretation (dense dots).

The diagrams also show that the main rhetorical function communicated, as reflected by the RP at the top-most level of the structure (between the title and the text) is ELABORATION in both cases. According to the relation definition provided by Mann (2005), this means that, as for their main functions, both texts intend to provide additional details about the topic mentioned in the title. It is also obvious, however, that the rest of the structure is far from being identical either from the point of view of the quality or the quantity of relations in the source text and the translation. Examining the extent to which the RPs and

the rhetorical structures coincide, one can see that from the altogether 15 relations in the two texts only 5+5 match, which means that there is only a 66.67% match between the rhetorical structure of the Hungarian source text and its English translation, constituting a major shift (as indicated by a + sign in column 5 of Table 2). Table 2 summarizes in columns 2, 3 and 4 the way in which this is calculated.

Text	Identical RPs in HST+ETT	Total RPs in HST+ETT	Match in % (identical vs. total RPs)	Shift of rhetorical structure
15	5+5=10	7+8=15	66.67%	+

Table 2: The degree to which the rhetorical structure of the source text and the translation coincide (match is indicated in %)

Considering the signalling of the RPs, the two texts differ in this respect as well. In the Hungarian source text five relations are signalled by conjunctions: CONTRAST (*azonban* [lit.: *however*]), VOLITIONAL CAUSE (*másfelől* [lit.: *on the other hand*]), EVALUATION twice (*ezért* [lit.: *therefore*]; *ráadásul* [lit.: *furhermore*] and CONJUNCTION (*és* [lit.: *and*]. In the English translation only four relations are signalled: CONTRAST (*however*), NON-VOLITIONAL RESULT (*Hence*) and CONJUNCTION twice (*as well as; on the one hand, and…on the other*). Thus the proportion of signalled RPs relative to all the RPs in the Hungarian text (5 vs. 7) is relatively high, 71.43%, whereas the proportion of signalled RPs relative to all the RP in the English translation (4 vs. 8) is merely 50%.

Since the results of the analysis indicate that **it is not the frequency of RPs that changes in translation but their quality and distribution**, with the help of Bell's (1988) Event Structure model, I have also examined the place of these shifts in the generic structure (event structure) (for a more detailed representation of this analysis see Károly 2013). This analysis explores in which event structure components of the news story the shifts appear so that conclusions may drawn regarding the way in which relational propositional shifts affect discourse structure and information content. Table 3 demonstrates the event structure components of text 15 that are affected by shifts and also how many shifts can be identified in the given component.

Text	Event Structure components				
	Background	Action	Follow-up	Commentary	Setting
	history		consequence	evaluation	
15	1	1	1	1	1

Table 3: The place of relational propositional shifts in the event structure

As Table 3 shows, the event structure components where the shifts occur in text 15 are Background, Action, Follow-up, Commentary and Setting. Interestingly, the shifts affect components where the journalist shares his/her subjective view, evaluation and expectation(s) regarding the event reported on (Commentary) and the details of the actual event (Background, Action, Follow-up, Setting). Rhetorically, i.e., from the point of view of the actual message the writer intends to communicate, these are the most significant elements of the news story. The fact that most of the shifts appear in these components suggests that,

consciously or unconsciously, as a result of the shifts of RPs, **the translators modify the relational propositional contents of these and thus**, possibly, alter – in a very subtle way – **the message** intended by the journalist**.**

Returning to the question motivating the current paper and relating to the nature of translational discourse production, from the above it may be assumed that translators, during the process of (target) discourse production, perform both reproductive and productive (creative) activity. Therefore their work may be regarded as **both text production *and* reproduction**. Furthermore, it is important to note that as the translator is constantly "controlled" by the text he/she is translating, translational discourse production is an even **more complex and conscious activity** than original discourse production, and as such requires special skills and competences.

4   Summary

This paper aimed to answer the question whether translational discourse production is to be regarded merely as simple text reproduction, or rather as a complex text creation process involving both discourse production and reproduction. The results of a case study focusing on a crucial aspect of coherence (the recreation of rhetorical structure) were reviewed to provide empirical evidence for the assumption that translational discourse production may not be regarded as a simple reproductive or secondary text production activity only. The corpus of news translation explored clearly indicated that translators perform both productive (creative) and reproductive tasks while (re)constructing the rhetorical structure (and consequently the relevant aspects of the coherence) of the source text in the translation.

The major implication of the above for the study of translation as text is that – from a cognitive and functional perspective – **translational discourse production may best be seen as a dynamically changing productive and reproductive kind of activity** (see also Károly 2007). The proportion of the productive and reproductive tasks of the translator depends on the genre/text type the given text belongs to, as well as the purpose and function of translation. Therefore the nature of translational text construction may be represented on a cline, which goes from literal translation at one end, to free translation at the other end. Translational text production is thus best conceived as a **gradual phenomenon** (Figure 4), which ranges from literal translation, a mainly reproductive and not creative activity, to free translation, a highly productive and creative activity.
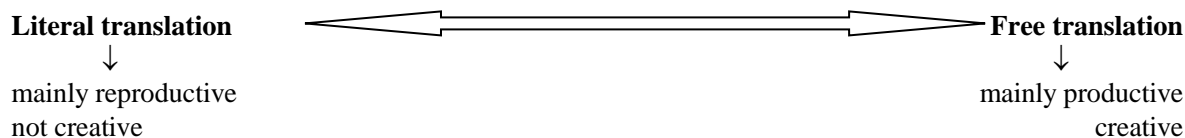
Literal translation   ⟺   **Free translation**
↓   ↓
mainly reproductive   mainly productive
not creative   creative

Figure 4: The gradual nature of translational discourse construction

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