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Theses of PhD dissertation

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FOREIGNIZATION AND ADAPTATION – REALIA-LEXEMES IN THE
***ONE MINUTE STORIES* BY ISTVÁN ÖRKÉNY**

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Thesis

1. Topic and Goals of the Dissertation

1.1 Topic

Minimythes – textes choisis et adaptés par Tibor Tardos. With these words begins the French translation of István Örkény's work, which was published just two years after the original piece. *Adaptés* – adapted, that is. Seldom does the translation strategy offer itself so clearly.

One of the basic principles of translation theory is the production of a target text, that has the nearly the same impact on the target language reader as the source language text had on the original reader. The *Egyperces novellák* by István Örkény – or, as they are called in English, *One Minute Stories* – belong to the *crème* of Hungarian grotesque literature, and although Örkény often confessed to having described specifically Hungarian situations, they have been translated into a large number of languages with huge success. (In my dissertation, *One Minute Stories* refers to the title of the literary work, whereas one-minute-story to the literary genre.) His short stories contain numerous cultural references to the era of the Second World War, especially to the Hungarian way of life in the fifties and the sixties.

The translators have to face serious challenges when transferring phenomena that are unknown to a readership with different cultural background knowledge. In this case the translations require special treatment from the translators, so the words and expressions with a different perspective or philosophy of life can be rendered into the foreign language. The translator brings about his own cultural background, and incorporates it in some way into his translations, the target language text. The finished text may refer back to the translator's deeper cultural knowledge and his relationship to the target language, in addition to his knowledge of the languages.

1.2 Aims of the Research

The goal of my research is to state more general connections after addressing the main questions through the analysis, comparison and the evaluation of the results. The work aims to answer the question whether it is possible to show in the French, German and English translations of the one-minute-stories a typical translation strategy based upon the translation methods employed. (In this paper, the term *translation technique* is used as a synonym for *translation method.*)

The primary goal was to examine, if through the application of a new method the amount of adaptation can be measured. It is a procedure by which – with the help of the translation methods used by the various translators – two, or as in our case, even four literary translations can be compared to each other. With this method I have been able to order the translators and separately also the various groups of realia-lexemes according to their degree of adaptation. The order should justify the assumption I had initially as to the least and the most adapted versions of the short stories, who are, beginning with the smallest degree of adaptation: the translations by the two German translators Vera Thies and Terezia Mora, followed by the translator into English Judith Sollosy, and then into French, Tibor Tardos. The order has been drawn up from the information I gained from a questionnaire I received via electronic mail from Mora and Sollosy, and from the original correspondence between Örkény and Tardos on the translation of the one-minute-stories. The latter led me to the conclusion that Tardos would have the highest degree of adaptation. It is the aim of the research questions to test the applicability of my method and that of the research goals.

The questions put forward should be investigated from the perspective of the translator and the translation methods they used, and only to a smaller degree from the perspective of the different groups of the realia-lexemes. In short: What translation methods do the translators employ and what do they result in? And secondly, in the case of realia-groups, how do these translation methods arise?

2. The Research Method

In this dissertation I use an inductive descriptive-analytical method, which is based on the comparative analysis of the source language texts (90 one-minute-stories by István Örkény) to their translations into German, English and French (altogether 211 target language texts). I am aiming at theoretical consequences, so we will find the source language texts in the centre of my investigations; from them I deduce the realia-lexemes: these are then grouped as to their occurrence in the SL texts, and then described. To make things easier, they are grouped into six larger thematic groups (proper names, toponymes, realia-lexemes of everyday life, social-historical realia-lexemes, folklore, quotes and titles), according to their content, that link the thematically linked words and expressions in smaller groups. Then the methods used for their translation are investigated and grouped according to typical features. Last but not least, I describe the characteristics of the examples found in the corpus. With the help of the methods used and a scale I had previously set up I am able to follow the translation strategy, as carried out by the various translations in the case of the thematic groups. Finally, I try to find points of regularities, from which I am able to deduce consequences for a wider range of literary translation. From these points it follows that the classification used in this paper has been put together from the examples in the corpus, though I have also made use of the relevant literature (Klaudy 1999, 2004, Valló 1998, 2000, 2002, Forgács 2002, 2004a, 2004b, Lendvai 1986, 1988), which has been adapted to my needs.

Apart from the relevant sources, secondary literature and the reviews of the *One Minute Stories*, I have used the published Hungarian, English, German and French versions of the stories as my corpus (see 4.). Furthermore, I have consulted various thesauri, encyclopedias, mono- and bilingual dictionaries.

I have managed to establish contact with two of the translators, Terezia Mora (TLTG2) and Judy Sollosy (TLTE1 and TLTE2); with their help I have been able to collect information about their translation strategies. I am purposely using the plural here, as the strategies they had used in their translations may have varied from case to case. The correspondence of Örkény and Tardos has equally offered indispensable insight into the translation process (Örkény-Tardos 1997).

3. Structure of the Paper

Chapter 1: Introduction
- structure of the dissertation
- statement of research topic and research questions
- hypothesis, the introduction of the corpus and the research method

Chapter 2: Örkény and his *Egyperces novellák*
- historical and cultural introduction of the period
- Örkény's place in literary life and grotesque literature
- the circumstances of publication, characteristics
- the translations of the *One Minute Stories* and their translators
- reviews of the various translations of the *Egyperces novellák*

Chapter 3: The Variations of the Term *Realia*
- questions of translatability and culture
- aspects of the classification
- solution- and gap-centred approaches
- content of the term *realia*
- new definition of *realia*

Chapter 4: Translation Strategies and Translation Methods
- position of the translation methods on a scale
- the translation methods *per se*

Chapter 5: The Realia-lexemes
- Analysis of the realia-lexemes from the corpus according to the thematic groups
- analysis of the corpus with the help of various examples

Chapter 6: Evaluation of the Results of the Analysis

4. **Sources**

The corpus investigated in the dissertation contains the realia-lexemes derived from the volumes listed underneath. (The original *Egyperces novellák* by Örkény was first published in 1968; however I have been using the 1984 edition of the book in my research. This is the reason why one of the German translations precedes the original.) In my paper the various editions are referred to by a logical abbreviation (e.g. TLTE2 stands for target language text in English, 2nd translation):

(SLT=)
Örkény I. 1984. *Egyperces novellák*. Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó.
(TLTG1=)
Örkény I. 1979. *Gedanken im Keller*. Berlin: Eulenspiegel Verlag (transl. by Vera Thies).
(TLTF=)
Örkény 2001a. *Minimythes*. Budapest: Corvina (transl. by Tardos Tibor).
(TLTE1=)
Örkény I. 2001b. *One Minute Stories*. Budapest: Corvina (transl. by Judith Sollosy).
(TLTG2=)
Örkény I. 2002. *Minutennovellen*. Franfurt/M.: Suhrkamp Verlag (transl. by Terezia Mora).
(TLTE2=)
Örkény, I. 2006. *More One minute Stories*. Budapest: Corvina (transl. by Judith Sollosy).

My corpus consists of the 533 realia-lexemes to be found in the *Egyperces novellák*. This short form of literature is highly suitable for further analysis in the field of realia-lexemes as it contains a high number of cultural references to specific phenomena in the culture of the target language. When compiling the corpus, I have always considered the supposed background knowledge of the potential foreign language reader, so as to ensure that I examine only data that convey the impression of foreignness to the German, English or French reader. This way I managed to gather 533 realia-lexemes from altogether 301 short stories (90 original Hungarian stories plus 39 from TLTG1, 47 from each TLTG2 and TLTF, and altogether 78 stories from TLTE1 and 2). These expressions stand in their context in the corpus and are grouped into six major thematic groups: place-names (i.e. toponymes,146

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examples, e.g. names of streets, towns etc.), proper names (131 examples, names with surnames and first names, nicknames, also addresses etc.), realia-lexemes of everyday life (172 examples, food, beverages, the names of occupations etc.), social-historical realia-lexemes (58 examples, institutions, military ranks etc.), titles and quotations (41 examples) and the realia-lexemes of folklore (21 examples).

5. Theoretical background

In this paper I aim to answer the following question: Can I, by examining the translation methods used by the translators draw conclusions as to the translation strategies?

The words and expressions the translations have trouble with are culturally determined, and extralingual help is needed to render them into the target language. However, the term *realia*, which is mostly used in the Hungarian secondary literature, is ambiguous. Furthermore, the authors investigating the problem do not agree on either the term or the content of it. With the help of the relevant literature I have tried to set up a system in which the various terms and names for the culturally determined expression can be incorporated. In order to be able to do this, I have differentiated between two approaches: the solution-centred and the gap-centred approach. Within this theoretical frame I introduce the most important authors and traditions: the Hungarian (Klaudy, Forgács, Valló, Lendvai, Heltai etc.), the German (Koller, Wills, Kade etc.), the Anglo-american (Newmark. Chesterman, Baker, Katan etc.), the Scandinavian (Kujumäki, Leppihalme, Pedersen) and the Slavic tradition (Barhudarov, Vlahov-Florin, Tellinger, Sipko, Levý etc.).

My paper deals with the translation of the words and expressions that are determined by a specific culture. Translation study often presumes that these do not have constant equivalents in the dictionaries of the target language. They may in fact not have one on the *langue* level; however, translators usually do find the right expressions, they also have a choice between several translation methods. These methods are determined by the translation strategy (foreignization or adaptation) chosen instinctively or intentionally by the translator.

The idea of drawing up a scale where the different translation methods are ranked according to the degree of adaptation comes from Hervey (Hervey et al. 1995: 13). The author distinguishes between two opposite tendencies: interlinear, source language-oriented as opposed to literal, target language-oriented translation strategies. These two poles, which equal the two translation strategies of Venuti (1998, *domesticating* and *foreignizing translation*), appear as translation methods that can be investigated in the target language texts. The retention of realia-lexemes as a foreign word (i. e. transliteration) meets the criteria of the foreignizing translation whereas the technique adapting is responsible for the full adaptation of the lexeme. Through the inspection of the translation methods I have been able to draw conclusions about the strategies hiding behind the method. In his model Hervey places the translation methods into the following order, as illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1.
The translation methods in Hervey's model

foreignization   <———————————————— >   adaptation
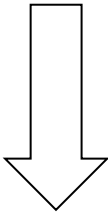 source-language-orientation   target-language-orientation

* —————— * —————— * ———————— * ———————— *
Exotism – cultural borrowing – calque – communicative translation – cultural transplantation

Valló's (2002) views on cultural realia – as she calls the realia-lexemes – are one of my main sources. She considers acculturation a phenomenon that cannot be left out in the translation process. She also accentuates the importance of finding the right balance between faithfulness to the original and accepting the different needs of the potential target language reader. Valló also sets up a scale on the ground of the various degrees of adaptation, on which eight translation methods are to be found.

In my model the strategies for rendering culturally determined realia-lexemes are arranged on what might be called a Venutian or a Hervey-scale (Venuti 1995, Hervey et al. 1995), ranging from the most foreignizing to the most adapting. My scale (Table 2.) has been established with the help of relevant literature but reflects my own opinion and views on the topic. It contains only those methods for which I have found plentiful examples:

Table 2.
The connection between translation strategies and translation methods

translation strategy	translation method
foreignization ⬇ **adaptation**	Transliteration
	Transliteration with some assimilation
	Addition
	Partial equivalent
	Direct translation
	Elimination
	Generalization
	Adapting

I am using *adapting* and *adaptation* in two different senses: *adaptation* is a translation strategy and represents the opposite of foreignization (and could also be called domestication), whereas *adapting* is a translation method that leads to adaptation. The translation methods will be introduced through examples taken from the corpus:

Transliteration:
(1) Szeme csillogott, s valamilyen képzelt **csárdás** ritmusára halkan összeütögette a bokáját. (SLT: 169)
(1a) His eyes glistened, and he silently snapped his ankles together to the rhythm of some **csárdás** only he could hear. (TLTE1: 53)

Transliteration with minor changes:
(2) A segéd javaslatára vett két doboz norvég szardíniát és két szelet **fogast** aszpikban. (SLT: 168)
(2a) Sur la proposition du vendeur, il choisit deux boîtes de sardines norvégiennes et deux tranches d'un délicate poisson du lac Balaton, **le *fogache***, en gelée. (TLTF: 64)

Addition:
(3) A segéd javaslatára vett két doboz norvég szardíniát és két szelet **fogast** aszpikban. (SLT: 168)
(3a) Sur la proposition du vendeur, il choisit deux boîtes de sardines norvégiennes et deux tranches **d'un délicate poisson du lac Balaton**, le fogache, en gelée. (TLTF: 64)

Partial equivalent:

(4) Föllelkesedve, csaknem lebegve sétált a **Rákóczi úton**. (SLT: 362)
(4a) He strolled, he floated down **Rákóczi Road**. (TLTE1: 48)

Direct translation:
(5) – Ez micsoda, kérem? – **Kolbászkrém** – mondta a segéd (SLT: 167)
(5a) „By the way. What's that?" „**Sausage cream**" (TLTE1: 51)

Elimination:
(6) Piszkos és sovány volt, de ő is elég jó ruhákat viselt, egy kis bundamellényt,
vattanadrágot, vastag pamutharisnyát és gumikalocsnit. (FNYSZ: 313)
(6a) Le petite pouvait avoir quatre ou cinq ans; elle était sale et maigre, mais ses vêtements
paraissaient chauds et plutôt de bonne qualité. (CNYSZF: 60)

Generalization:
(7) Volentik bácsi gyors, de rövid csapásokkal evezett, ahogy a **Balatonon** szokás. (SLT: 374)
(7a) Voletnik rowed with the brisk, economical strokes for which the boatmen of the **lake** are
renowned. (TLTE1: 61)

Adapting:
(8) Úgy szédült, mint aki fülig szerelmes, vagy örül a tavasznak, vagy két **fröccsöt** szopott le
egymás után. (SLT: 168)
(8a) It was the light-headedness of a man head over heels in love who had downed two
glasses of **champagne** into the bargain. (TLTE1: 52)

In the literature review I have emphasized that it was not my intention to find the right
term with the appropriate definition. However, it has helped help me to find the definition I
intend to use as starting point of my work. In my paper I am calling culturally determined
words and expressions *realia-lexemes* – according to Kujumäki's understanding of the term
(2004) – thus differentiating them from realia, which are real life objects, phenomena etc. By
realia-lexemes I mean expressions of the language that are characteristic for a language, and
will, due to their mutual/common background knowledge of the members of a language
community, nearly equal associations, as they share common connotations. This definition
should act as the starting point for my investigations.

To my understanding these connotations, associations and emotional loads have a
much stronger importance than the question of untranslatability, so much more that I do not
wish to emphasize their theoretically untranslatable nature but their shared connotations. The
realia-lexemes in my corpus have been chosen mainly on the grounds of their bearing
significant notions for the Hungarian language community, which need to be rendered into the
target languages.

6.   **Results**

The answers to the ten research questions are given within a theoretical framework,
namely that of the method I have set up to investigate the translation methods used by the
translators. The following ten points aim to highlight different aspects of my research.

6.1 In my thesis I was trying to prove the assumption that realia-lexemes do not belong to the
class of so-called untranslatable words. It is true, that on the level of *langue*, they do not have
constant equivalents, however, the high number of appropriate solutions all justify the idea
that on the *parole* level they are translatable. I have also noticed that translators usually have a

choice between several, sometimes even eight methods, from which they choose according to personal preferences or various other factors. One of these factors is the norms of target language usage. In this paper I have investigated 1155 equivalents of altogether 533 Hungarian realia-lexemes, of which about one-third do not meet the criteria of real translation as the linguistic signs of the source language signs are not replaced by target language signs (i.e. transliteration with or without changes, as well as elimination). All other methods agree with the translatability. I have also found that the translators used altogether ten methods, from which only eight have been explored as there have not been enough examples in the corpus for the other two (the remaining techniques I have called specification and explanation).

6.2. At the beginning of the fifth chapter in the dissertation I have presented the various possibilities the translator has at hand by translating an existing example from my corpus (*kolbászkrém)* into the language of my paper, German. With this I wanted to demonstrate that in theory there is a spectrum of possible choices from which the translator chooses one (or eventually two, which will reinforce each other). I have found that despite this number of possibilities the translator usually choose the same method for translating a realia-lexeme occurring in the same context. As the realia-lexemes in my corpus have one to four equivalents, this means that in two-thirds of the lexemes investigated there is an overlapping, at least two translators have used the same method (mainly direct translation, I must add). There has not been a single example where all four equivalents represent different translation methods. The same results were found when comparing the methods of the two translators into German: in 26 out of 34 cases where there were two equivalents of the same realia-lexeme, the same method was used.

6.3. One of the less significant questions raised in this paper concerns the shift that is occurring in the orientation of the target language text. I have found that there is usually a shift involved which moves the target language text into the direction of the target language reader. I have assumed that – apart from the transliteration of the lexeme, which leaves it unchanged – each translation method represents a certain shift; they only differ in their degree. Obviously, the further the method used is placed on the scale from foreignization, the higher the degree of adaptation. The translators thus intend to facilitate the target readers' understanding and interpretation.

6.4. I have managed to prove that there exists a dynamic balance between the two poles of the scale, between the foreignizing and adapting strategies. This balance appears for the totality of realia-lexemes. On the level of the various thematic groups and the different translations of the stories there is a clear difference in the orientation; some are more foreignizing, some, on the other hand, are more adapting. However, these differences are balanced on the whole.

Table 3.
My scale

foreignization   adaptation

transliteration	transliteration with major changes	addition	partial equivalent	direct translation	elimination	generalization	adaptation

6.5 In the dissertation I have investigated the translations of the realia-lexemes with the goal of determining similarities and differences between the translators, as well as their strategies

and methods. According to the results, as seen in Table 3, the method used most often by all four translators was direct translation; however, there are differences as to the order of the other seven methods between the translators. Thies and Mora, the two translators into German have instead chosen the foreignizing methods (the direct translation is followed in their case by transliteration without changes and with minor changes, as well as the partial equivalent), whereas Sollosy and Tardos have opted for more adapting methods (direct translation is followed by adapting, generalization, and elimination in Tardos's case). The differences are accounted for mainly by the different target language systems, the individual preferences of the translators and the differing thematic content of the groups. (The abbreviations stand for the translators: VT = Vera Thies, TM = Terezia Mora, JS = Judy Sollosy, TT = Tibor Tardos):

Table 3.
The order of the translation methods according to their frequency

	VT	TM	JS	TT
1.	direct translation	direct translation	direct translation	direct translation
2.	transliteration with minor changes	transliteration	adapting	adapting
3.	transliteration	partial equivalent	transliteration	generalization
4.	partial equivalent	transliteration with minor changes	generalization	elimination
5.	generalization	adapting	transliteration with minor changes	transliteration with minor changes
6.	adapting	generalization	partial equivalent	partial equivalent
7.	addition	addition	addition	addition
8.	elimination	elimination	elimination	transliteration

6.6 The realia-lexemes in the corpus present a difficulty as to the right amount of help the reader requires with the interpretation of the target language text. In the investigation I have found that the translators did their work with a potential foreign language reader in mind and have adapted this degree of help to his supposed background knowledge (this does not apply for transliteration). Text comprehension and the ability to draw the right conclusions have been facilitated by footnotes, explanations, definitions and other means, usually incorporated in the target language text.

6.7 It follows from the very nature of the one-minute stories that the changes carried out in the interest of the reader could not add longer phrases or passages to the short story as the form, that is the length, is strictly bound. Otherwise, we risk losing their very essence. I have found that apart from Sollosy the translators have avoided footnotes or other means which would alter the length of the otherwise short stories. On the other hand, there were some passages in the text – especially in Tardos's translation – where phrases, clauses or whole passages have been omitted.

6.8 It was one of my assumptions that there exists a degree of pragmatic adaptation which is typical for the thematic groups. This assumption has been justified, as seen in Table 4: In four

out of six groups the direct translation method was used most often. With the exception of proper names, a strong tendency for the use of adapting could be detected. The abbreviations stand for the various thematic groups: TOP = toponymes, PN = proper names, SOC = social-historical realia-lexemes, EDL = realia-lexemes of everyday life, QUOTE = quotes and titles, FOLK = folklore):

Table 4.
The frequency of translation methods in the thematic groups

	TOP	PN	SOC	EDL	QUOTE	FOLK
1.	direct translation	transliteration with minor changes	direct translation	direct translation	direct translation	adapting
2.	partial equivalent	transliteration	generalization	adapting	transliteration	direct translation
3.	transliteration	direct translation	adapting	generalization	adapting	partial equivalent
4.	transliteration with minor changes	partial equivalent	partial equivalent	elimination	generalization	transliteration
5.	generalization	adapting	elimination	transliteration with minor changes	addition	generalization
6.	adapting	generalization	addition	transliteration	partial equivalent	transliteration with minor changes
7.	elimination	elimination	transliteration	addition	transliteration with minor changes	elimination
8.	addition	addition	transliteration with minor changes	partial equivalent	elimination	addition

6.9 The tendency to adaptation, which has been characteristic for five out of six thematic groups, has been overridden by the introduction of a specific number, which incorporated the number of the various translation techniques used by each translator and thus showed the degree of adaptation. It seemed to me that this number is more objective as it takes all methods applied within a group of realia-lexemes into account. With the help of this number the order of the various groups according to their typical degree of adaptation is as follows (starting with the smallest measure of adaptation):

proper names → toponymes → titles and quotes → social-historical realia-lexemes → realia-lexemes of everyday life → folklore

However, the order of adaptation regarding the translators and thus their translations bears a much higher significance:

Thies (TLTG1) → Mora (TLTG2) → Sollosy (TLTE1 and TLTE2) → Tardos (TLTF)

6.10 The question of translation loss is always present when translating cultural references. The *One Minute Stories* do not leave much space for longer explanations, paraphrases or footnotes. When compensating for missing information, it has to be carefully integrated into the text. I have found that some translation methods are responsible for losses in style or content, others, on the other hand, aim to minimize them.

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