

Explication of Implicatures in the Persian Translation of Barack Obama's Selected Speeches

Mohammad Saleh Sanatifar
Universiti Sains Malaysia, MALAYSIA
s.sanatifar(a)yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Translating texts / discourses that contain ample implicatures, such as political speeches, is one of the most provoking aspects of translation. The reason is that the translator cannot confidently decide if uncovering implicatures in the translation of such texts / discourses makes them more relevant to the target readers, to follow Gutt (1991), or makes them less relevant by putting an extra burden of mental processing on the reader, to follow Gutt's critics. The related literature widely supports the former view; however, few empirical studies support this. The present thesis is a cognitive step forward in this area. It seeks to examine if explication in Persian translations of implicatures intended by Obama in his political speeches would make translation more relevant to Iranians, as the target readers, and reduce their mental processing demand. Furthermore, the thesis seeks to examine how the initial cognitive level of the Iranian target reader affects the degree of relevance, and finally, which mode of translation, non-explicated or explicated, is more acceptable to them.

Sperber and Wilson's (1986) relevance theory, as an ostensive-inferential theory of pragmatics and particularly implicatures, combined with Gutt's (1991) application of relevance theory to translation and van Dijk's cognitive account of relevance in political discourse (2005), form the theoretical and analytical model of this research. Methodologically, the research is of a causal nature and draws on a quantitative-qualitative design to answer two quantitative and two qualitative research questions. The textual corpus of the study consists of a selection of Barack Obama's political speeches delivered between the years 2008 to 2013. A total of 373 Iranians, as the target population of the study, are selected and surveyed for their opinions on the degree of explicitness before and after the explication of implicatures in a questionnaire.

Analysis of the data and findings in the first place affirm the applicability of relevance theory in the identification of political implicatures. Second, the findings reveal that explication, if fulfilled appropriately by political experts, significantly enhances the relevance of a translation to its target readers. It is further shown that explication is an ongoing relevance-enhancing mechanism, which stops automatically where the target readers meet the expectation of relevance. Third, the study concludes a normative relationship between explication and acceptability in the translation of political implicatures. Fourth, through a more in-depth interview and based on the results, the study extracts nine categories and explains the most likely reasons for the target readers' reflections in the survey. In this thesis, the crucial role of cognition in pragmatic translation is highlighted, and it is revealed that translation is truly a triadic cognitive interaction between the communicator, the translator, and the receptor.

KEYWORDS: explication, implicature, political speech, pragmatic, reader, relevance theory.

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