

The Problem of Grammatical Untranslatability

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Introduction

Having a long tradition, translation has become a significant phenomenon in our everyday lives. Most of the books we read, the movies we watch or the games we play have gone through some kind of translation. This matter is strongly important in Hungary because, unlike most European countries west from us, a large amount of people does not speak foreign languages and even if they do, there seem to be no wider need for original language literature or cinema etc. in the Hungarian society. To give an example, box office results show that Hungarian movie-goers do not like to pay for watching film that are subtitled, the vast majority of people goes to movies with Hungarian dubbing (Safar et al. 2009: 7). In literature, the situation is similar, but there seem to be a slowly increasing number of people purchasing books published in English, yet the amount of readers who can enjoy a book not translated to Hungarian is rather small. But translation, as Klaudy¹ (1994: 18-9) stated, is not just a profession or a course taught at colleges and universities, it has developed into a subject of research.

The reason I have become interested in translation is partly the nature of translation as a field of research, more precisely some questions about the underlying mental processes: what kinds of operations the translators' mind perform; what types of decisions are made by the translators; what are the bases and the goals of these decisions etc. On the other hand I also find both the various problems arising during translation and the task of seeking solutions to these problems fascinating. Untranslatability is one of the problems I came across during my readings. In my opinion that there are some particular elements of a language that cannot be translated into another language, like some culture specific elements, is true but this impossibility of translation cannot be because of the different grammatical structures of the languages. Furthermore, in many cases there are cultural references in novels, which can only be comprehended if the reader is familiar with the cultural background of the author or their motherland. This sort of translation problem, though it is highly interesting, is not part of this research; I focus only on the problems in connection with grammatical untranslatability.

There are no languages with identical grammatical systems. All of them are unique, the differences can occur on a wide scale. The dissimilarities of the English and the Hungarian language can provide several examples of the various grammatical categories

¹ The English quotations from Hungarian works (by Klaudy and Tarnóczy) are my translations.

such as pronouns, tenses, auxiliary verbs, diverse verb forms and grammatical omissions. Roman Jakobson had a really optimistic idea about the capacity of languages; his opinion was that “languages differ essentially in what they must convey and not in what they can convey” (qtd. in Vermes, 2009a: 42). My belief is that his idea is especially true in the case of grammatical differences, which takes us to the basic concept of my analysis. Even if there is no utter formal correspondence in two languages’ grammar the boundaries set by grammatical differences can always be bridged or bypassed. Despite the differences between grammatical categories and structures of the languages involved in the translation process, with the right decisions it is possible to render the meaning of the missing category.

1. The notion of grammatical untranslatability

To be able to determine if a grammatical structure is translatable or not, the significance of other concepts – like translation, translation studies and translatability – should be clarified in the first place. Looking through the relevant literature, I have become familiar with the different authors' different points of views about these topics. In the following I would like to give the main definitions and ideas of the concepts.

1.1 The importance of translation

Translation is an important activity due to the diversity of languages throughout the world. People speak different languages which makes it hard to understand each other, and to communicate. With the help of translation, this barrier can be eliminated so understanding becomes possible and communication may take place.

1.2 What is translation studies and why is it important?

According to the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, translation studies is “an academic discipline concerned with the study of translation” involving pedagogical and research activities, “from developing theoretical frameworks to conducting individual case studies” (Baker 1998: 277). In her book *A fordítás elmélete és gyakorlata* Klaudy states that the significance of this field of study is “collecting, organising and generalising the past and present experience of translators and interpreters for developing theories” (1994: 28).

1.3 Translatability and untranslatability

By performing the activities mentioned above, such theories and concepts as translatability can be developed. Translatability is “mostly understood as the capacity for some kind of meaning to be transferred from one language to another without undergoing radical change” (Baker 1998: 273). The notion of translatability is unavoidably accompanied by the notion of untranslatability, which refers to the impossibility of translation or, in other words, to those situations when “translation fails” (Catford 1965: 94). If it is stated that something is untranslatable or is translatable but poses some problems during the translation process, and by the theories developed to solve these problems, the translators' training and job can be made easier.

1.4 The definition of grammatical untranslatability

In a dictionary called *A Dictionary of Translation Technology* grammatical untranslatability is defined as the following:

This refers to the impossibility of translation due to the grammatical differences between languages. No two grammars are identical. If a grammatical category of the source language is absent in the target language, then lexical means have to be employed to render the meaning in the original text. [Catford, 1965:93-103; Kelly, 1994: 4677-82; Raffel, 1988; Ure, 1964: 5-11.] (Sin-wai 2004: 93)

It is true that in case of a missing category the translator has to use lexical means to make the meaning of the source text clear in the target text but this does not mean that the concept of grammatical untranslatability is an existing issue. Grammatical untranslatability is a rather misleading concept considering that rendering the meanings of the absent categories is possible with the help of other lexical means or various grammatical transfer operations.

1.5 Untranslatability according to J. C. Catford

As the definition above shows the editor of the dictionary made use of the ideas of J. C. Catford concerning grammatical untranslatability. Actually in his essay, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation* Catford is mainly concerned with what translation is; he offers the reader a general linguistic theory, introduces some basic definitions and the types of translation, discusses concepts like equivalence and formal correspondence in translation and in the last chapter he also deals with the limitations involved in translation and the various reasons behind them. In my chapter I am going to present the basis of Catford's theory of untranslatability.

Catford states that the source text and its various elements "are more or less translatable rather than absolutely translatable or untranslatable" (1965: 93), but there are some specific cases in total translation when translation becomes impossible due to a missing element in the source language or the target language. If this absent element is functionally relevant, so it has important role in rendering the communicative function of the source text, the translator cannot convey the functionally relevant features to the target language and later on cannot build other relevant features into the meaning of the target

text. This means that the translation of these features fails, the translation becomes impossible. He differentiates two types of untranslatability: cultural, which can occur because the ideas and concepts available in the two cultures are not the same; and linguistic, when there is no formal correspondent of a structure of the source language in the target language, “[it] occurs typically in cases where an ambiguity peculiar to the SL text is a functionally relevant feature – e.g. in SL puns” (1965: 94). The sources of the ambiguities can be the “shared exponence of two or more SL grammatical or lexical items,” so a phonological or a graphological form contains the meanings of two or more grammatical or lexical item, or polysemy which can only be found in the source language. (1965: 94)

Catford’s example of the ambiguity due to shared exponence is the following: “Time flies” (1965: 95). He explains that the word ‘flies’ is ambiguous because it can be interpreted either as a plural form of ‘fly’ as a noun or as a third person singular, present tense form of a verb as both of them are graphologically illustrated with -s. Considering this, the sentence can have two meanings, one being “How quickly time passes” and the other would be something like “Make observations on the speed of flies” (1965: 95). He claims that the translation of this sentence would not cause any problem in a usual, normal context but this is a great issue in those cases when the sentence or phrase should serve as an example of ambiguity. But the fact that translation is a process which happens in a communicative situation cannot be overlooked. Translation is an activity which relies on the context and the communicative situation on a high extent, so considering the context of the sentence, the meaning can be easily figured out.

2. The process of translation

Translation is a complex series of actions that take place in the translator's mind. Klaudy's definition of translation is the following: "[it is] an activity with certain objective patterns, but it also allows numerous subjective decisions" (1994: 19). My research focuses on the subjective decisions of translators to solve the problems caused by the grammatical differences of the languages. For this reason I am going to take a look at the mental processes in translation in general, putting strong emphasis on decision making and the types of decisions that can be made. I believed introducing the decision making processed to be important as the grammatically problematic examples I am going to show have gone through all of these processes. When encountering these structures the translators had to make various decisions and choices before producing these in the target language.

2.1 Mental processes

The process of translation includes two basic stages: analysis and synthesis. During the analysis the translator has to rely on his or her knowledge about the source language and the source text to correctly interpret the text so that he or she would be able to find the correct representations in the target language (Tarnóczy 1966: 191). The synthesis of the target text consists of those grammatical operations which help to convey both the information contained in the source text and the communicative intentions of the author (Tarnóczy 1966: 193). A simplified representation of the process can be seen in figure 1. There are two kinds of analytical processes, one concerning the source text as an act of communication in context, called macro-analysis, and the other one in which the synthesis of the target text relies, the micro-analysis of the details of the source text. (Vermes 2009b: 43)

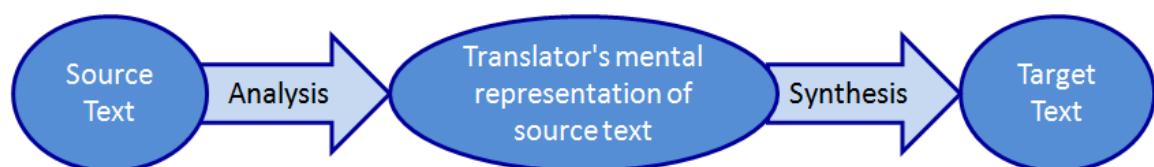


Figure 1. Mental processes during translation

2.1.1 Macro-analysis

In translation macro-analysis means a preliminary analysis of the source text and the source and the target communication situation to establish a translation method and strategy. The translator has to find the answers for two sets of questions concerning the source and the target communication situation. The first set is an extended version of the Lasswell formula (Who says what in which channel to whom with what effect?), which focuses on the purpose of the communication, but also deals with the mode, place, reason and time of communication. This extended formula is the following: Who says what to whom with what communicative intention, in what spatio-temporal setting, and with what linguistic means? The aim of the second set of questions is the specification of the conditions influencing the target text, these questions are: “What is the purpose of the translation? What are the expectations of the commissioner? Who is the intended audience? What are the circumstances, needs and expectations of this audience?” (Vermees 2009b: 43-4)

2.1.2 Micro-analysis

Micro-analysis in translation means the continuous linguistic analysis of segments of the source text; its aims are to make clear the words’ linguistic function and the expressions’ syntactic structure, to clarify the “disambiguating structures and semantic ambiguities, assigning reference, enriching the meaning of vague expressions” etc. (Vermees 2009b: 44)

2.2 Decision making in translation

As Vermees states, we can talk about a decision-making situation “when there is a need to make a non-trivial choice, which involves an element of risk” (2009b: 51). In translation the decision making process starts with the comprehension of the source text and task analysis, after which the translator has to make certain preliminary or macrocontextual decisions. These decisions relate to the whole text which is going to be translated so the translator can prevent inconsistency of decisions at lower levels of translation. At this point, the translation method and strategy can be established and the analysis of details can be started so that the translator would be able to make the necessary decisions of detail, or microcontextual decisions.

Decisions of detail concentrate on specific problems of particular units which occur in the source text and handle phenomena as “complex syntactic structures, ambiguity of meaning, semantic vagueness, metaphors, wordplay, allusions, humour, irony, proper

names, neologisms, collocations, cultural peculiarities etc.” (Vermes 2009b: 54). The last step for the translator is the synthesis of the target text, to turn his mental representations into visual representations, to produce the text. Translation is a really complex activity, the translator has to take into consideration a number of questions regarding the communicative situation so it is not compulsory that analysis always have to precede synthesis as the produced target text requires revision several times before the translator actually finishes it. Figure 2 shows a simple visual representation of the decision making in translation.

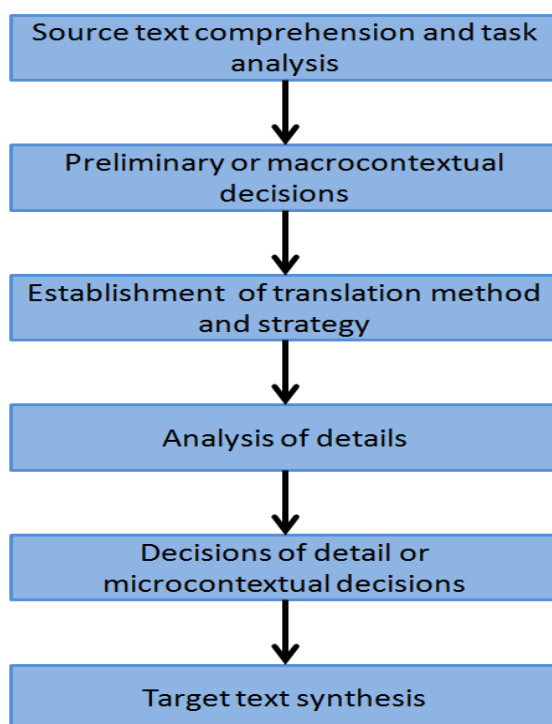


Figure 2. Decision making in translation

3. Examples of problematical grammatical constructions and the possible solutions

The examples I am going to present are from Terry Pratchett's *Equal Rites* and its two Hungarian translations. The production of the re-translation of the book, along with other previously published Pratchett books, is the result of purchasing the publication rights of the first publisher (Cherubion) by the present one (Delta Vision Kft.). One of the reasons I decided to use this novel and its translations in my TDK-paper is to show the different choices the translators made, to convey the information present in the original book, but sometimes they did not make the translation explicit or simply omitted the problematic constructions. When searching for examples my primary goal was to find those in which the translators tried to render the meanings of the original structures instead of simply omitting the problematic structure. Being familiar with the novel and enjoying reading it was also important for me. Lastly, the fact that Pratchett uses a lot of metaphors, pop-cultural references, puns, telling names, etc. makes his works hard to translate and ideal for various linguistic analyses, and as sometimes these are built on the colourful grammatical system of English his works are also ideal for my analysis.

3.1 Sir Terry Pratchett and the Discworld novels

First, I would like to introduce the author, Terry Pratchett. Sir Terence „Terry” David John Pratchett was born on 8 April 1948 in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire and is one of Britain's most popular and successful contemporary authors. His books have been sold all over the world in more than 70 million copies and have been translated into 37 languages. According to his online biography, he is currently the second most-read author in the UK, after J. K. Rowling, and the seventh most-read non-US writer in the USA. Pratchett is most likely known by his ongoing Discworld-series which counts 42 novels (Smythe 2010). The fantasy series takes place in an imaginary world, where the Earth is round, flat and lies on the back of four elephants standing on the shell of a giant tortoise. All the events and characters in this world are imaginary, but in most cases, they are reflections, often parodies, of the real world. Some of Pratchett's Discworld novels have a main motif, e. g. a historical problem or era (the medieval China – *Interesting Times*, the ancient Egypt – *Pyramids*), or are parodies of a classic story (Shakespeare's *Hamlet* – *Wyrd Sisters*, Dante's *Divine Comedy* – *Eric*). The novels are separate; all of them has a different plot, but there are returning characters and allusions to events in earlier books.

3.2 Equal Rites

Equal Rites is a fantasy novel published in 1987; it is the third novel in the Discworld series. The story is about a girl, Esk (her full name is Eskarina Smith) who inherited the power of the wizard Drum Billet. But actually the existence of a female wizard is completely unimaginable on the Discworld. As she grows up it becomes harder to control her power so she and the local witch, Esmeralda Weatherwax travel to the Unseen University in the city of Ankh-Morpork so that Esk could gain the proper knowledge to control her powers. Esk does not gain entry to the University on the first try but, as Granny Weatherwax suggests, she becomes a servant, which also proves to be a way to get in. While there, Esk becomes friends with an apprentice wizard named Simon and they have an adventurous journey in the Dungeon Dimensions together. In the end of the novel Eskarina is finally accepted to the Unseen University as a wizard apprentice.

In the further chapters the original English novel is mentioned as Source Text. The first Hungarian translation of the novel, called *Egyenjogú rítusok*, was published in 1999 by Cherubion which is going to be mentioned as Target Text 1 during the analysis of the examples, while Target Text 2 is going to denote to the other publication of the book from 2010 by Delta Vision Kft. also titled as *Egyenjogú rítusok*.

3.3 Examples of grammatically problematic constructions and the translators' solutions

While reading the texts I collected those grammatical structures and categories from the original novel which could mean problems or questions for the translator. The reason of these problems can be that there are no formal correspondents of some English grammatical categories in Hungarian or if the same category exists, it is not normally used in everyday language. The translators occasionally chose to simplify the problematic constructions but rendering the meaning of the original structure was more frequent. In my analysis below gender-specific pronouns, present perfect tense, some auxiliary verbs, passive verb form and ellipsis are going to be analysed and shown in bold.

3.3.1 Gender-specific pronouns

In the first place, in case of the gender-specific pronouns the problem is caused by the English gender distinction of the pronouns in 3rd person singular which cannot be found in Hungarian as it is neutral in terms of the gender of the subject. The English language has three: the masculine he which refers to men, boys and male animals; the feminine she in case of women, girls and female animals; and the neuter it which is used when the pronoun

indicates that the referents may be inanimate things, animals and babies when the sex is unknown (Thomson and Martinet 1986: 24). In Hungarian there is no such distinction: if they are present in the Hungarian texts, both the masculine 'he' and the feminine 'she' are translated as 'ő' and the neuter 'it' becomes 'ez' or 'az' in Hungarian. The translation of these pronouns can be troublesome when there is reference in the source text to both a previously mentioned female and male character, consequently the Hungarian translation of these texts should differentiate between the masculine and the feminine pronouns.

In the first example some of Granny Weatherwax's thoughts are presented about Esk: "Granny Weatherwax opened her eyes and looked straight up at the sky; it was darker up here, more purple than blue. **She** thought: why not? **She's** a quick learner. **She** knows more herblore than I do" (1987: 63). In this text the first pronoun refers to Granny Weatherwax in contrast with the other two where she stands for Esk. This contrast is highlighted in both Hungarian translations: in Target Text 1 it looks like: "Mállotviksz Néne kinyitotta a szemét, és föl nézett egyenesen az égre; itt fönnt sötétebb volt, inkább lila, mint kék. Azt gondolta: miért ne? A **lányka** gyorsan tanul. Többet tud a fűvészkedésről, mint én." (1999: 48); Target Text 2 also has this type of emphasis on the second pronoun: "Wiharvész Anyó kinyitotta a szemét, és egyenesen felnézett az égboltra; idefent sötétebbnek tűnt, inkább lilának, mint kéknek. Arra gondolt: miért is ne? A **lány** gyorsan tanul. Többet tud a gyógynövényekről, mint én" (2010: 58).

On the other hand, in the translations of the following quotation from the Source Text, where all three variants of the English 3rd person singular pronouns are present, the translators used different methods while translating the text. "Simon was as excited as **she** was, but **it** showed only because **his** eyes watered more and **his** stutter got worse" (1987: 171). Here the three referents are Simon (masculine pronouns), Esk (feminine pronoun) and the excitement of Simon (neuter pronoun).

The translation in Target Text 1 is the following: "Simon épp olyan izgatott volt, mint **ő**, de csak annyiban mutatkozott meg, hogy a szeme jobban könnyezett és a dadogása súlyosbodott" (1999: 132). Here the translator decided only to separate the female referent from the male and probably considered the context enough to figure out to whom 'ő' refers.

However the translator of Target Text 2 tried to be as specific and clear as possible while translating this sentence and replaced some of the pronouns with suitable Hungarian nouns: "Simon éppen olyan izgatott lett, mint **a lány**, de **ez** csak abból látszott, hogy a szeme még nedvesebbé vált, és **a fiú** még jobban dadogni kezdett" (2010: 158).

Another different and unusual solution can be seen in the next example. The extract from Source Text is: “The man meant to say: ‘Push off and bother someone else.’ **He** meant to give **her** a light cuff about the head” (1987: 135). The translator of Target Text 1 decided to refer to ‘her’ (Esk) as ‘kölok’ not specifying the gender. The sentences in Target Text 1 are the following: “A férfinak szándékában állt így válaszolni: Húzz innét és nyaggass mást! Szándékában állt egy könnyed nyaklevest kiosztani a **kölöknek**” (1999: 103). Even if it is not stated what the gender of the child mentioned above is it can easily be figured out from the context. The translation of this example in Target Text 2 is almost the same as in the previous example: “A férfi azt akarta mondani: – Tűnj el és piszkálj valaki mást! – Meg akarta legyinteni a **kislány** fejét” (2010: 124).

In conclusion, most of the previous examples showed that specifying the gender the English pronouns refer to is possible in Hungarian by replacing the pronouns with appropriate noun phrases. Figure 3 shows the previously analysed examples and solutions of the translators along with some further examples from the novels.

Source Text	Target Text 1	Target Text 2
“Granny Weatherwax opened her eyes and looked straight up at the sky; it was darker up here, more purple than blue. She thought: why not? She’s a quick learner. She knows more herblore than I do.”	“Mállotviksz Néné kinyitotta a szemét, és föl nézett egyenesen az égre; itt fölön sötétebb volt, inkább lila, mint kék. Azt gondolta: miért ne? A lányka gyorsan tanul. Többet tud a fűvészkedésről, mint én.”	“Wiharvész Anyó kinyitotta a szemét, és egyenesen felnézett az égboltra; idefent sötétebbnek tűnt, inkább lilának, mint kéknek. Arra gondolt: miért is ne? A lány gyorsan tanul. Többet tud a gyógynövényekről, mint én.”
“Simon was as excited as she was, but it showed only because his eyes watered more and his stutter got worse.”	“Simon épp olyan izgatott volt, mint ő, de csak annyiban mutatkozott meg, hogy a szeme jobban könnyezett és a dadogása súlyosbodott.”	“Simon éppen olyan izgatott lett, mint a lány , de ez csak abból látszott, hogy a szeme még nedvesebbé vált, és a fiú még jobban dadogni kezdett.”
“The man meant to say: ‘Push off and bother someone else.’ He meant to give her a light cuff about the head.”	“A férfinak szándékában állt így válaszolni: Húzz innét és nyaggass mást! Szándékában állt egy könnyed nyaklevest kiosztani a kölöknek .”	“A férfi azt akarta mondani: – Tűnj el és piszkálj valaki mást! – Meg akarta legyinteni a kislány fejét.”
“The smith nodded and fumbled in the blanket until he located a tiny pink hand. He guided it gently to the wood. It grabbed it tightly.” (1987: 15)	“A kovács bólintott, és addig turkált a pokrócban, míg rá nem lelt egy csöpp, rózsaszín kézre. Gyöngéden a fához irányította, amit a kéz aztán szorosan megmarkolt.” (1999: 12)	“A kovács bólintott, és addig kotorászott a takaróban, amíg rá nem lelt egy apró, rózsaszín kézre. Gyöngéden a fához vezette. A kéz erősen megmarkolta a botot.” (2010: 13)
“ She met his unsteady eye.” (1987: 107)	“ Az asszony pillantása összetalálkozott férje tántorgó tekintetével.” (1999: 82)	“Majd a férje összeszaladó szemébe nézett.” (2010: 98)

Figure 3. Examples of English gender specific pronouns and the Hungarian solutions

3.3.2 Present perfect tense

The next grammatical construction I would like to mention is the present perfect tense. As it is stated in *A Practical English Grammar* by Thomson and Martinet the present perfect is a tense which is “formed with the present tense of have + the past participle” (1986: 165). As this grammatical category has a specific time reference which cannot be found in Hungarian anymore, this can also cause problems during the translation process. To illustrate some possible solutions I chose cases where the basic similarity is the use of some kinds of adverbs of time and the past form of the Hungarian verbs.

In the first one, the Source Text citation is the following: “I **have never heard** it put so succinctly, yes,’ said the wizard” (1987: 14). Here, the solutions to render the meaning of the perfect or perfective into Hungarian are almost the same. In Target Text 1 this sentence appears as: “**Még sosem hallottam** ezt ilyen velősen megfogalmazva, ám valóban így van – bólintott a varázsló” (1999: 11); and Target Text 2 contains this sentence as: “**Még soha nem hallottam** ilyen lényegretörően megfogalmazni, igen – felelte a varázsló” (2010: 12).

Using almost the same method, the translations of “Esk **had often wondered** if the Turtle was really a myth.” (1987: 229) from Source Text are the following: “Esk **sokszor eltöprengett**, hogy vajon a Teknőc valóban pusztá mítosz-e.” (1999: 177) in Target Text 1 and “Eszk **gyakran elgondolkozott** azon, hogy mi van, ha a teknőc igazából csak legenda.” (2010: 214) in Target Text 2. In these examples the same pattern can be observed: the combination of a time adverb and the Hungarian verb in past form.

On the contrary, the translations of the present perfect which can be found in Source Text are fundamentally different. The sentence “I’ve **always wanted** one of those big wicker ones, you know, with the sort of sunshade bit on the top.” (1987: 281) occurs in Target Text 1 as “**Mindig is szerettem volna** egy olyan nagy fonottat, tudod, aminek a tetején van az a napellenzőszerűség” (1999: 216). Dissimilarly to the first example, here the translator of Target Text 2 used the indicative mood rather than the conditional mood: “**Mindig is tetszettek** azok a nagyobbfajta, fonott darabok, olyan napernyőszerűséggel a tetejükön” (2010: 263).

Altogether, it seems to be possible to render the time reference of the present perfect into Hungarian by combining an adverb of time with the past form of the verb. In Figure 4 an extended table shows my examples.

Source Text	Target Text 1	Target Text 2
'I have never heard it put so succinctly, yes,' said the wizard.	Még sosem hallottam ezt ilyen velősen megfogalmazva, ám valóban így van – bólintott a varázsló.	Még soha nem hallottam ilyen lényegretörően megfogalmazni, igen – felelte a varázsló.
Esk had often wondered if the Turtle was really a myth.	Esk sokszor eltöprengett , hogy vajon a Teknőc valóban pusztá mítosz-e.	Eszk gyakran elgondolkozott azon, hogy mi van, ha a teknőc igazából csak legenda.
I've always wanted one of those big wicker ones, you know, with the sort of sunshade bit on the top.	Mindig is szerettem volna egy olyan nagy fonottat, tudod, aminek a tetején van az a napellenzőszerűség.	Mindig is tetszettek azok a nagyobbfajta, fonott darabok, olyan napernyőszerűséggel a tetejükön.
"I've heard that some people do it all the time." (1987: 17)	" Hallottam , hogy egy csomóan állandóan reinkarnálódnak." (1999: 13)	"Úgy hallottam , egyesek folyton azt csinálják." (2010: 15)
"I don't think I've ever heard of something quite like this before." (1987: 180)	"Nem hinném, hogy valaha is hallottam ehhez foghatót." (1999: 139)	"Nem hinném, hogy hallottam volna már ilyesmiről." (2010: 167)

Figure 4. Sentences including present perfect tense and their Hungarian translations

3.3.3 Auxiliary verbs

The third category to discuss is the structures containing auxiliary verbs. Auxiliary verbs provide further grammatical meaning to the phrase or clause in which they appear. The translation of some English auxiliary verbs can be troublesome considering that Hungarian does not have as complex auxiliary system as English does. It means that some English auxiliary verbs have corresponding Hungarian auxiliaries but when they are missing their meaning has to be rendered using some other grammatical or lexical means. According to Thomson and Martinet they can be classified as principal auxiliaries, modal auxiliaries and semi-modals (1986: 109), this categorisation is represented in Figure 6, while in *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* the classification of auxiliary verbs is slightly different as it is shown in Figure 5 (1985: 137).

Principal auxiliaries	Modal auxiliaries		Semi-modals
To be	Can	Could	To need
To have	May	Might	To dare
To do	Must	Had to	used
	Ought		
	Shall	Should	
	Will	Would	

Figure 5. The classification of auxiliary verbs (Thomson and Martinet 1986: 109)

Central modals	Can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must
Marginal modals	Dare, need, ought to, used to
Modal idioms	Had better, would rather, would sooner, be to, have got to etc.
Semi-auxiliaries	Have to, be about to, be able to, be bound to, be going to, be obliged to, be supposed to, be willing to etc.

Figure 6. The various categories of auxiliaries according to Quirk et al. (1985: 137)

In my view the translation of those auxiliary verbs or pair of auxiliaries can be the most problematic which have almost the same meaning with slight differences in the not directly expressed implications of the words.

3.3.3.1 May and might

Both modal auxiliaries indicate the possibility of the happening of something, but the fundamental difference between them, when ‘might’ does not stand for the past form of ‘may’, is the degree of uncertainty they express; the auxiliary ‘may’ expresses that an event or act is likely to happen while ‘might’ refers to something which is rather unlikely to happen. When translating to Hungarian both serve as indication of possible actions but there is not as clear distinction as in English. In the two translations of *Equal Rites* this difference is emphasised by both translators.

“He **may** do very well, of course.” (1987: 14) and “If you **might** see your way clear to becoming, that is, whether you would accept a Chair.” (1987: 281) are my two examples from Source Text.

These are translated in Target Text 1 as “Természetesen **nem kizárt**, hogy nagyon jól fog menni neki.” (1999: 10) and “Ha **esetleg** lehetőséget **látnál** arra, azaz, vajon elfogadnál-e egy Tanszéket?” (1999: 216). The most important difference is the use of conditional mood in Target Text 2 when translating the sentence with ‘might’ so that the greater degree of uncertainty is highlighted. The same choice was made by the translator of Target Text 2 when she faced this problem, her translations are the following: “Természetesen **lehet**, hogy nagyon sikeres lesz.” (2010: 11) and “Ha **esetleg el tudná képzelni**, szóval nem fogadna-e el egy tanszéket?” (2010: 263).

Considering these examples it can be concluded that it is possible to illustrate the slight difference between the meanings of these two auxiliaries. Figure 7 illustrates some of the possible translations of ‘may’ and ‘might’.

Source Text	Target Text 1	Target Text 2
He may do very well, of course.	Természetesen nem kizárt , hogy nagyon jól fog menni neki.	Természetesen lehet , hogy nagyon sikeres lesz.
“There may be something else we can do—” (1987: 245)	“– Talán van valami más, amit megtehet...” (1999: 189)	“–Azt mondtam, hogy talán valami mást tudunk még tenni...” (2010: 229)
‘If you might see your way clear to becoming, that is, whether you would accept a Chair.’	Ha esetleg lehetőséget látnál arra, azaz, vajon elfogadnál-e egy Tanszéket?	Ha esetleg el tudná képzelni , szóval nem fogadna-e el egy tanszéket?
“... It might not work. ... It might work.” (1987: 271)	“... Lehet , hogy nem sikerül. ... Lehet , hogy sikerül.” (1999: 209)	“... lehet , hogy nem működik. ... lehet , hogy működik.” (2010: 252)

Figure 7. May, might and their Hungarian translations

3.3.3.2 Must and have to

When indicating obligation or compulsion **must** implies self-obligation while **have to** implies that the source of the obligation is an external force (Quirk et al. 1985: 226). As in Hungarian these two auxiliaries are both translated as ‘kell’, the source of obligation is not revealed. To point out the difference between the two auxiliaries the translators should find another way to convey their meaning. The examples from Source Text are “And now you

must burn the staff.” (1987: 19) and “‘I shall **have to** declare you an honorary wizard’” (1987: 268). In Target Text 1 the translations of these two sentences are “És most **el kell égesd** a botot!” (1999: 14) and “**Kénytelen leszek** kinevezni téged tiszteletbeli varázslónak” (1999: 206). In my opinion both translations indicate some kind of external force, while in Target Text 2 the distinction of the source of obligation is more explicit; the sentence: “Most pedig **el kell égetned** a botot.” (2010: 16) makes the obligation more personal than the second sentence: “**Ki kellene neveznem** tiszteletbeli varázslónak” (2010: 250). In my opinion this structure implies an external pressure. Figure 8 contains a short review of the ways the translators decided to show the difference between ‘must’ and ‘have to’.

Source Text	Target Text 1	Target Text 2
‘And now you must burn the staff.’	És most el kell égesd a botot!	Most pedig el kell égetned a botot.
“‘And now I must be going.’” (1987: 191)	“És most mennem kell ” (1999: 148)	“Most pedig mennem kell .” (2010: 178)
‘I shall have to declare you an honorary wizard.’	Kénytelen leszek kinevezni téged tiszteletbeli varázslónak.	Ki kellene neveznem tiszteletbeli varázslónak.
“‘I’ve got some big orders to fill by tonight, if it goes on like this I’m going to have to train someone up.’” (1987: 205)	“Van néhány nagy megrendelésem, amiket ma estére teljesítenem kell, ha ez így megy tovább, kénytelen leszek betanítani valakit.” (1999: 158)	“Ma este két nagy megrendelést kell teljesítenem, és ha ez így megy, kénytelen leszek kiképezni valakit.” (2010: 191)

Figure 8. Different translations of ‘must’ and ‘have to’

3.3.4 Passive verb form

My fourth example is the passive verb form which, even though it is an existing category, is not normally used in Hungarian, while in English all verbs have passive forms regardless the tense they are used in. Passive voice is used when the focus of the sentence is on the action or the agent of the action is unimportant, unknown or is obvious from the context. Figure 9 shows some examples how to form the passive forms of verbs, collected by Thomson and Martinet.

Tense/verb form	Active voice	Passive voice
Simple present	keeps	is kept
Present continuous	is keeping	is being kept
Simple past	kept	was kept
Past continuous	was keeping	was being kept
Present perfect	has kept	has been kept
Past perfect	had kept	had been kept

Figure 9. Examples for the active and passive forms of verbs (Thomson and Martinet 1986: 265)

Most of the sentences in passive voice are transformed into active voice in the Hungarian translations, just like the following quotation from Source Text: “Then they **were gone**, soaring into the growing light over the clearing and streaming away over the trees” (1987: 70). In Target Text 1 the translation of the passive form is: “Aztán **elrepültek**, a tisztás fölött növekvő fénybe fölszárnyalva, a fák fölött özönölve” (1999: 54). Similarly to the first translation the problem of the passive verb’s form is solved with the transformation to active verb form: “Majd **eltűntek**, szétszóródtak a tisztás feletti egyre erősebb fényben, és elsuhantak a fák fölé” (2010: 64).

The next example shows a slight difference between the choices of the translators when encountering the passive verb form. “It’s a fact known throughout the universes that no matter how carefully the colours **are chosen**, institutional décor ends up as either vomit green, unmentionable brown, nicotine yellow or surgical appliance pink.” (1987: 203) from Source Text can be found in Target Text 1 as the following: “Univerzumokszerte közzismert tény, hogy nem számít, milyen gondosan **választják ki** a színeket, az intézményi díszlet mindig vagy hányászöldben, nevén nem nevezhető barnában, nikotinsárgában vagy protézis-rózsaszínben végződik” (1999: 157). In this translation the passive verb is transformed into its active equivalent in Hungarian in third person plural form. On the contrary, in Target Text 2 the first person plural form of the verb is used: “Az egész univerzumban ismert tény, hogy függetlenül attól, mennyire gondosan **válogatjuk meg** a színeket, a belső dekoráció végül hányászöld, kimondhatatlan barna, nikotinsárga vagy sebészeti rózsaszín lesz.” (2010: 189).

Since speakers of Hungarian usually do not use passive verb form in those cases when a verb is passivised the construction draws the attention of the listener or the reader.

In my next example a stative passive construction can be found and in the second Hungarian translation the passive verb form is kept, which could serve to show some kind of stylistic difference the translator believed to be important. The sample sentence, “She had a vision of Esk filling up with magic, until every tissue and pore **was bloated** with the stuff.” (1987: 121) is translated in active voice by the translator of Target Text 1: “Látomása támadt arról, hogy Esk addig töltődik fel mágiával, míg minden szövete és pórusa **fölpuffad** tőle” (1999: 93). But as mentioned above, in Target Text 2 the passive form is kept by the translator in the following way: “Lelki szemei előtt Eszk egyre csak telt a mágiával, amíg minden szövete és pórusa **tömve** nem **lett** vele” (2010: 112).

The examples mentioned above show that even if passive verb forms are normally not used in Hungarian their translation is still possible either by using the active form of the verb instead of the passive form or by keeping the passive form to use it as a stylistic device. The summary of my examples can be found in Figure 10.

Source Text	Target Text 1	Target Text 2
Then they were gone , soaring into the growing light over the clearing and streaming away over the trees.	Aztán elrepültek , a tisztás fölött növekvő fénybe fölszárnyalva, a fák fölött özőnölve.	Majd eltűntek , szétszóródtak a tisztás feletti egyre erősebb fényben, és elsuhantak a fák fölé.
It’s a fact known throughout the universes that no matter how carefully the colours are chosen , institutional décor ends up as either vomit green, unmentionable brown, nicotine yellow or surgical appliance pink.	Univerzumokszerte közismert tény, hogy nem számít, milyen gondosan választják ki a színeket, az intézményi díszlet mindig vagy hányászöldben, nevén nem nevezhető barnában, nikotinsárgában vagy protézis-rózsaszinben végződik.	Az egész univerzumban ismert tény, hogy függetlenül attól, mennyire gondosan válogatjuk meg a színeket, a belső dekoráció végül hányászöld, kimondhatatlan barna, nikotinsárga vagy sebészeti rózsaszín lesz.
She had a vision of Esk filling up with magic, until every tissue and pore was bloated with the stuff.	Látomása támadt arról, hogy Esk addig töltődik fel mágiával, míg minden szövete és pórusa fölpuffad tőle.	Lelki szemei előtt Eszk egyre csak telt a mágiával, amíg minden szövete és pórusa tömve nem lett vele.

Figure 10. The translations of passive verb forms

3.3.5 Ellipsis

Last, but not least elliptical phrases can also be troublesome constructions during the translation process. Ellipsis means “grammatical omission” as Quirk et al. states (1985: 883) but it is important that the context in which it is found helps to recover the omitted word, phrase or clause (Vermes 2009b: 76).

While reading the source text I encountered with numerous examples with the omission of a whole verb phrase. One of them was “. . . unless the characters get totally beyond the author’s control. **They might**” (1987: 9). “. . . hacsak a szereplők teljességgel ki nem bújnak az író irányítása alól. **Ami nem kizárt.**” (1999: 7) is the first translation while the second translation is the following: “. . . már amennyiben a szereplők nem kezdenek el a szerző szándékaitól függetlenül önálló életet élni.

De ez is előfordulhat.” (2010: 7)

In the translations mentioned above the translation of the ellipsis is possible with the help of grammatical transfer operations meaning that the omitted phrase is reformulated with the help of the appropriate verb phrase. In the quoted passage from Target Text 2 the elliptical construction is also separated from the rest of the text as it is written in a new line which means that the translator believed this to be an important comment of the author.

In the following examples the same tendency of the translators can be observed. The short passage quoted from Source Text contains two elliptical structures.

“‘Good, I could do with getting back to civilization. She needs me. That staff is taking over. **I said it would**, but did anyone listen?’

‘**Did they?**’ said Hilda, still trying to work out what Granny meant by getting back to civilization.” (1987: 122)

In both Hungarian translations the omission of the verb phrase is eliminated and to be able to produce a text which is acceptable in the target language. A rephrased form of the omitted structure is provided by the translators to make the meaning of the English sentence clear. Including minor differences the translation of the original elliptical sentences are solved in almost the same ways. Target Text 1 is translated as:

“– Nagyszerű, ideje, hogy visszatérjek a civilizációba. A lánynak szüksége van rám. A bot kezdi átvenni az irányítást. **Mondtam, hogy ez lesz**, de hallgatott rám valaki is?

– **Hallgatott?** – kíváncsiskodott Hilda, megpróbálva kiókumlálni, mit akarhatott mondani Néne a civilizációhoz való visszatéréssel.” (1999: 94)

Quite similarly these phrases can be found in Target Text 2 the following way:

“– Az jó, rám fér már egy kis civilizáció. Szüksége van rám. A bot kezdi átvenni felette az uralmat. **Megmondtam, hogy ez lesz**, de hallgattak rám?
– **Hallgattak?** – kérdezte Hilda még mindig azon gondolkozva, mit érthetett Anyó a civilizáció alatt.” (2010: 112)

All in all, it can be concluded that rendering the meanings of the English elliptical structures is possible even if it means that the Hungarian structure has to be completely rephrased. In Figure 11 the previously mentioned examples can be found for an easier comparison.

Source Text	Target Text 1	Target Text 2
... unless the characters get totally beyond the author's control. They might .	... hacsak a szereplők teljességgel ki nem bújnak az író irányítása alól. Ami nem kizárt .	... már amennyiben a szereplők nem kezdenek el a szerző szándékaitól függetlenül önálló életet élni. De ez is előfordulhat .
'Good, I could do with getting back to civilization. She needs me. That staff is taking over. I said it would , but did anyone listen?' ' Did they? ' said Hilda, still trying to work out what Granny meant by getting back to civilization.	“– Nagyszerű, ideje, hogy visszatérjek a civilizációba. A lánynak szüksége van rám. A bot kezdi átvenni az irányítást. Mondtam, hogy ez lesz , de hallgatott rám valaki is? – Hallgatott? – kíváncsiskodott Hilda, megpróbálva kiokumlálni, mit akarhatott mondani Néné a civilizációhoz való visszatéréssel.	“– Az jó, rám fér már egy kis civilizáció. Szüksége van rám. A bot kezdi átvenni felette az uralmat. Megmondtam, hogy ez lesz , de hallgattak rám? – Hallgattak? – kérdezte Hilda még mindig azon gondolkozva, mit érthetett Anyó a civilizáció alatt.

Figure 10. Elliptical structures and the Hungarian translations

4. Conclusions and future aims

During my research I analysed various sources about translation and translation studies with a strong emphasis on the mental processes and the decision making in translation as these are the bases of what kinds of translations do the translators produce and also on grammatical untranslatability which is the main topic of my research. J. C. Catford's theory of untranslatability was also described highlighting his ideas about grammatical untranslatability as formulated in his *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. Furthermore, I introduced the author, Terry Pratchett, and his novel, *Equal Rites*, I used to find examples of problematic grammatical constructions. I defined gender specific pronouns, present perfect, some auxiliary verbs, passive verb form and ellipsis and gave examples of the ways the translators solved the translations of these constructions.

As Mounin claims, "translation . . . is never wholly impossible" (qtd. in Vermes, 2009a: 44). The Hungarian translators of *Equal Rites* did not always decide to render the meaning of the constructions mentioned but in most cases they tried to figure out what the most appropriate rendering may be. In most of my examples the translators were able to render the meaning of the absent categories and illustrating the difference between the auxiliaries with almost similar meanings, so the majority of my examples verified Mounin's statement.

This list of examples is not complete yet as there are several other categories and structures in which English and Hungarian grammatical systems differ. I intend to continue my research to see if the translation of all English grammatical structures to Hungarian can or cannot be solved. Moreover, the analysis of further Terry Pratchett novels and their translations is one of my objectives. Furthermore, later on I would like to test my hypothesis in Hungarian to English translations as well analysing if all Hungarian grammatical constructions can be easily translated to English.

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