On Shlesinger's proposed equalizing universal for interpreting

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Introduction

When Baker (1996) compiled a list of potential universals of translation, she included something called "leveling", glossed as "the tendency of translated text to gravitate towards the centre of a continuum" (1996: 184). Baker went on to claim that "the individual texts in an English translation corpus are more like each other in terms such as lexical density, type-token ratio and mean sentence length than the individual texts in a comparable corpus of original English." This claim sounds entirely plausible, even if supported by only a small study of newspaper texts. However, Baker then goes on to cite a rather more elaborate study:

> Another example comes from a study of shifts along the oral-literate continuum (Shlesinger 1989). Shlesinger set out to establish whether simultaneous interpreting effects a change in the level of orality or literacy of a text. Interestingly, her overall finding was that oral texts take on more literate features in simultaneous interpreting and literate texts become more oral. In other words, the process of translation tends to move texts more towards the centre of the oral-literate continuum, to locate them away from either extreme.
>
> (Baker 1996: 184)

This reference is of interest for several reasons. First, given the dates, the concept of an "equalizing" (or "avoid the extremes") universal surely owes more to Shlesinger than to Baker (although Toury 1995 also mentions the "flatter" language of translations). Second, given the continued interest in translation universals (cf. Mauranen & Kujamäki 2004), it seems rather strange that this particular candidate for a universal has not been investigated further, or at least certainly not to the extent that researchers have looked at various forms of explicitation. Is it not peculiar that the studies in this field now generally claim that "translations tend to have more/less X than non-translations", overlooking the geometry of equalizing (whereby translations would tend to have less X and more - X, at the same time)? Third, Shlesinger's proposed universal is of interest because it incorporates the analysis of source texts, and might thus say more about causation than can studies based on "comparable corpora", which try to analyze

translation and non-translation within one language. And finally, this particular piece of evidence comes from conference interpreting: it is from a mode of translating (for us "translation" covers all modes) that is rarely mentioned in the literature on proposed universals. Indeed, so scarce are the references that it is unclear to what extent most of the proposed universals are supposed to include interpreting at all.

For all those reasons, I asked Dr Shlesinger for the text referred to. What I gratefully received was her MA thesis *Simultaneous interpretation as a factor in effecting shifts in the position of texts on the oral-literate continuum*, directed by Gideon Toury and defended at Tel Aviv University in 1989. The manuscript is sometimes hard to read, being a re-photocopied type-written manuscript (remember those days?). Since the text as such has never been published in English, what I propose to do here is reproduce its main arguments (everything in the big boxes is from the thesis, with the original page numbers in square brackets). I will try to assess what Shlesinger actually found. Then I will try to explain why what she found does not quite concord with Baker's representation of this and the other proposed universals. I might also find time to say why none of these are universals, but that will be beside the point.

Shlesinger (1989) in Shlesinger's words

Abstract

The object of the present study is to observe the relative orality of two ontologically different texts. Specifically, it examines the effect of simultaneous interpreting on the orality of the target text as compared with that of the source text, based on the relative incidence of features associated with oral (spoken-like) and with literate (written-like) discourse. [...]

[2] The corpus used here consists of four Hebrew and four English source texts and their respective target texts (produced by a total of three professional interpreters in real, rather than simulated conditions). Two out of each set of four texts were markedly closer to the oral end of the continuum, and two to the literate one.

Four of the parameters most frequently cited in the literature were used as a basis for isolating the features relevant to textual orality: (1) degree of planning; (2) shared content and knowledge; (3) lexis; and (4) degree of involvement. Every feature considered relevant to these parameters in the respective source and target texts was isolated in an attempt to pinpoint the shifts in the position of each text along the oral-literate continuum.

This analysis served as a basis for testing the following three hypotheses:
1. Simultaneous interpretation exerts an equalizing effect on the position of a text on the oral-literate continuum; i.e., it diminishes the orality of markedly oral texts and the literateness of markedly literate ones. Thus, the range of the [3] oral-literate continuum is reduced in simultaneous interpreting.
2. The equalizing effect of simultaneous interpretation is a more powerful force than the position of the target text within its respective literacy system; thus, the mode of interlingual transfer is a more powerful force than the preferred position of a target text. Specifically, it was predicted that shifts from either extreme of

> the continuum towards its center would supersede the ostensible tendency of Hebrew texts to become more literate in translation into English and of English texts to become more oral in translation into Hebrew.
>
> 3. The equalizing effect of simultaneous interpretation is a more powerful force than the explicitation typical of interlingual transfer.
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> The findings reveal that interpretation does have a consistent tendency to render a literate text more oral. In the case of the oral source texts, the findings were less unequivocal. Nonetheless, the analysis indicates clearly that the range of the oral-literate continuum is reduced in simultaneous interpretation.
>
> The hypotheses concerning the relative weight of the mode [4] of interlingual transfer, on the one hand, and of the literacy tradition, on the other, was borne out in the case of the literate source texts. The findings for the oral-type source texts were inconclusive, as were those related to the bearing of the mode of transfer on explicitation.

The first chapters then go over the background material: the nature of interpreting, and the research to that date on orality vs. literacy. Note that what is under study here is not whether a text is actually spoken or written, but whether it has the qualities associated with those modes. Thus a spoken text can be relatively oral or literate, as can a written one.

The four features taken to represent a position on the continuum are operationalized as follows:

– *Degree of planning*: Literate texts are more highly planned before they are produced, and this is shown in: 1) greater lexical density (i.e. a higher type/token ratio), especially as achieved by nominalizations, modifiers, subordinating conjunctions and the like; oral texts have more fragmented syntax and tend to use coordinating conjunctions, 2) use of cohesive ties, which is greater in literate texts, whereas oral texts have lower textual cohesion and thus assume greater knowledge of the context, 3) disfluencies and flow monitoring: oral texts have more redundancies, pauses, repetitions, and monitoring of information flow, to check on whether the text is being understood. [Note that here Shlesinger actually puts lexical density and cohesive ties under the same head; here we have separated them because of the relation between cohesion and the explicitation hypothesis, to which we return below.]

– *Shared content and knowledge*: Oral texts require that the addressee know more about the context, whereas literate texts have to be more explicit in their semantic references. [Shlesinger uses this particular continuum to argue that explicitation is a feature of more literate texts, since they are more context-independent. This effectively offers an explanation of why explicitation is ostensibly found in translations, since they cannot assume the same degree of shared content as can non-translations. Note, however, that explicitation in the use of cohesion markers – as in Blum-Kulka (1986) – may also be a consequence of the greater "planning" of the more literate texts. Blum-Kulka's prior hypothesis would thus seem to be integrated under two heads here.]

– *Lexis*: Parts of the lexicon are marked as being more literate or more oral: 1) colloquial language is associated with orality, 2) modals and hedges seem to be able to go either way [?], 3) intensification is lexicalized in literate texts, 4) oral language is perhaps more innovative, 5) literate texts use more cohesion markers. [Here we simply note the third occurrence of cohesion markers as a feature of relative literacy. This time they are of particular interest because Zellermayer (1987, 1990) had found that translations into English use more cohesion markers than do translations into Hebrew.]

– *Degree of involvement*: The more a text stresses the relations between the communication participants, the more it is oral. Orality is thus associated with the entire range of nonverbal features, as well as a more fragmented prosody (hesitations, false starts and the like, indicating points in a discourse where decisions are being made). [Note that the hesitations and false starts also come under "degree of planning".]

These four features thus give a very sizeable bundle of linguistic variables. Indeed, the main problem in the research design would seem to be that there are too many such variables, and that the relatively small volume of reliable previous research (almost all of it on English alone) provides little guarantee that they are all going to move the same way.

Chapter three reviews the previous literature on the way these variables might relate to conference interpreting. Here we retain only one observation:

> […] the overriding opinion among interpreters tends to maintain that oral-type texts are more amenable to interpretation than the literate type. Paradoxically, this overall inclination emerges despite the fact that virtually every writer on the subject does allude to insufficient knowledge of content and situation on the part of the interpreter as the foremost impediment to comprehension. […] It is the oral-type text, after all, which puts a greater burden of contextualization on the listener. (Shlesinger 1989: 52)

Interpreters, it seems, want to have their cake and eat it too. The categories suggest that they cannot really expect to have oral texts that make the context explicit. This alone would justify Shlesinger's categories as bringing a certain amount of clarity to the world of previous opinions.

The more serious prior research concerns the major hypotheses on translation universals. Here Shlesinger sets out to see which pattern predominates: the tendency to adapt to target-side expectations (represented by the findings of Zellermayer, to which we shall return), the tendency to explicitate no matter what the direction (in accordance with Blum-Kulka), or the tendency to equalize both the oral and literate extremes (as Shlesinger herself is claiming).

Shlesinger presents the competing hypotheses in very clear terms:

[91] In her studies of *written* texts and their translations, Zellermayer (1987) found that translations from English into Hebrew are consistently more oral in character. She attributes this to the more oral nature of Hebrew written texts and maintains that translations from Hebrew into English are consistently more literate for the same reason. Although confining her observations (in this as well as other papers) to written corpora, Zellermayer does not imply any mode-dependence [i.e., whether the texts are spoken or written] when it comes to the pattern of shifts which may be expected between any two languages. Thus, whatever shifts may be expected in orality should occur regardless of the mode (primary or secondary) of either the source or the target text.

If her hypothesis applies to spoken texts and to their interpretations as well, one would expect all the Hebrew-source-language texts in the corpus of the present study, whatever their position on the oral-literate continuum, to be *more literate* in their English-target-language versions, and all the English-source-language texts in the corpus, whatever their [92] position on the oral-literate continuum, to be *more oral* in their Hebrew-target-language versions. If this is found to be the case – i.e. if the direction of shifts in the case of oral interpretation is in keeping with that which has been found in connection with written translation – then the orality factor may be seen as more central to interlingual transfer than the medium used.

On the other hand, if the shifts along the oral-literate continuum in the case of interpretation do not conform with those observed in translation, this would appear to indicate that the mode of interlingual transfer (interpretation vs. translation) is a more decisive factor than the relative literacy of the two cultures.

By the same token, if the English interpretation of the literate Hebrew text reflects a shift towards orality (including greater contextualization), this may be taken as an indication that the mode of interlingual transfer overrides the "universal of explicitation" (Blum-Kulka 1986: 19) as well (unless one maintains that decontextualization by paralinguistic means may fully offset such a shift). Clearly, "greater explicitation" is not synonymous with greater literateness; it is primarily confined to those parameters of literateness which reflect the extent and means of contextualization.

[93] The two existing hypotheses concerning shifts in orality essentially imply that, all other things being equal, one may predict regular patterns of shifts in the contextualization parameter (at least) of interlingual transfer, regardless of (source or target) mode. The following table represents the predictions with regard to shifts in simultaneous interpretation as suggested by each of these, and by the mode-dependence hypothesis proposed below [endnote: irrespective of whether some of these shifts may in fact be norm-induced].

Source text:	Target text under the influence of:		
	Literacy-tradition dependence	Explicitation universal	Mode-dependence
Oral Hebrew	+ literate	+ literate	+ literate
Literate Hebrew	+ literate	+ literate	- literate
Oral English	- literate	+ literate	+ literate
Literate English	- literate	+ literate	- literate

+ literate = target text will be more literate than source text
- literate = target text will be less literate than source text

Before we move on to what Shlesinger actually finds, it is worth pausing at this comment that "'greater explicitation' is not synonymous with greater literateness" (1989: 92). As defined by Shlesinger, literateness is obviously much more than explicitation. Remember, though, that Blum-Kulka's explicitation hypotheses referred to cohesion markers alone. Remember, also, that cohesion markers appear as features in three of the four categories that Shlesinger uses to describe relative literateness (and could easily be added to the fourth category as well, since implicitness can be a marker of involvement). And bear in mind that one of the variables on which Zellermayer (later published in 1990) based her findings was precisely cohesion markers (summarized in Shlesinger 1989: 31-32, 91). It seems to me that the correlations predicted in the above table could have been tested by looking at cohesion markers alone. After all, this is a readily identifiable variable about which all three hypotheses make explicit claims. But Shlesinger is more ambitious.

Results

The thesis presents and categorizes all the shifts encountered in the analysis of the renditions. In many cases one wonders how the categorizations can be so unequivocal, but the overall impression is actually quite different. Once you get into this blow-by-blow account, the main reaction is, "But it's so obvious!". All the false starts and hesitations are cleaned up by the interpreter (that is one way interpreters save time), and each clean-up counts as a shift toward literateness. On the other hand, whenever the source text is very literate (legal discourse verbalized from written notes, or a formal speech at a conference), one would surely expect the interpreter's rendering to be more oral, since it is spoken, after all. So are we really testing something that is obvious and ultimately trivial?

Any apparent triviality can only be from the perspective of studies of written translation, where we too easily assume that the written word is the only word. As one follows Shlesinger's analysis, it becomes clear that the mode, the spoken conference situation, is what interpreting is all about; it is the particular set of constraints conference interpreters work with; it is no more trivial than is the profession itself.

The results of Shlesinger's analysis are most usefully summarized in the following tables:

[162] Oral source texts							
	Parameter						
	Density	Disfluencies	Contextual-ization	Formality of lexis	Evident-iality	Intensific-ation	Involve-ment
Into English	0	+ literate	+ literate	+ literate	0	0	+ literate
Into Hebrew	0	+ literate	- literate	0	+ literate	- literate	+ literate

[163] Literate source texts

	Parameter						
	Density	Disfluencies	Contextual-ization	Formality of lexis	Evident-iality	Intensific-ation	Involve-ment
Into English	- literate	- literate	- literate	0	0	0	0
Into Hebrew	- literate	- literate	- literate	0	- literate	- literate	0

- literate = shift towards greater orality
+ shift towards greater literateness
0 = no shift or inconclusive findings

Looking at the tables, it is clear that all the literate source texts move toward greater orality, and when this is not the case the variable proves inconclusive. So far so good: Shlesinger is right to claim that there is a movement from extreme literacy toward the center of the oral-literate continuum. The oral texts, however, give a mixed bag. There are actually movements toward greater orality for two variables: "contextualization" and "intensification". That is, the results in those two instances contradict what Shlesinger had hypothesized. The interpreter apparently made the oral texts even more oral.

What does this mean for the three potential universals contrasted above? Since all the findings for the literate texts moved in the same direction, the "literacy-tradition dependence" hypothesis has been found not to hold. So Zellermayer is out-to-lunch in this case: the interpreters did not simply adapt to what is "normal" in the target culture. What about explicitation? If Blum-Kulka's hypothesis holds, everything should become more literate (since explicitation has been categorized as a feature of literate texts). However, the one clear finding that we have here is that the literate texts become more oral, that is, they have *less* explicitation. So Blum-Kulka's hypothesis does not hold either. Since both those previous hypotheses had been justified on the basis of written translation, it follows that Shlesinger's fundamental hypothesis remains unfalsified: the spoken nature of interpreting appears to have more weight than the two alternative "universals". And that much might be considered justified with some empirical basis, no matter how mixed the findings for what happened to the oral source texts.

At this point we let Shlesinger draw her own conclusions:

[170] Hypothesis I

The first hypothesis centered on the equalizing effect of interpretation on the position of a text on the oral-literate continuum. Specifically, it was suggested that interpretation diminishes the orality of markedly oral texts and the literateness of markedly literate ones.

The findings above indicate that interpretation has a consistent tendency to render a literate text more oral. However, while interpretation does appear to increase

the literateness of oral-type Hebrew source texts, the findings for oral-type English source texts are less consistent. The fact that these turned out, on closer inspection, to incorporate some features more typical of literate texts (i.e. that they were not oral texts *par excellence* in every respect) may be relevant. Whether more extreme orality would yield different results must be ascertained on the basis of a corpus comprising texts which [171] manifest a lower degree of planning.

In other words, although borne out in part, this hypothesis cannot be confirmed without further empirical research, focusing on the effects of interpretation on oral-type texts in general and English ones in particular.

The corollary to Hypothesis I – i.e. that the range of the oral-literate continuum is reduced in simultaneous interpreting – has been clearly and unequivocally borne out by the present study.

Hypothesis II and its corollary

The second hypothesis concerns the relative weight of mode and of literacy tradition. It was predicted that shifts from either extreme of the continuum towards its center would supersede the tendency of Hebrew texts to become more literate in translation into English and of English texts to become more oral in translation into Hebrew.

The hypothesis has been borne out in the case of literate texts. Not only the Hebrew target texts *but the English ones* [172] *as well* exhibit a shift towards the oral end of the continuum. In the case of the oral-type texts, it was predicted that both the English and the Hebrew target texts would exhibit a shift towards greater literateness. The fact that this was corroborated in the case of the Hebrew source texts is in keeping with Zellermayer's findings [...] as well.

It is in the case of the oral-type English source texts that a potential contradiction lies between literacy-tradition and mode dependency. The findings seem to lean more heavily in the direction of confirming the literacy-dependence theory, since the target texts exhibit a shift towards even greater orality with regard to both the first and the second parameter.

Hypothesis III

The third hypothesis centered on the bearing of mode of transfer on the weight of the explicitation universal, and is largely restricted to the implications of shifts in the second parameter of orality as formulated in the present study. The complexity of this parameter, which operates on all levels of discourse, and the difficulty of quantifying it defy any attempt at conclusiveness. However, the analysis indicates [173] a greater degree of contextualization (which *mutatis mutandis* correlates with implicitation) in the interpretation of English oral-type texts as well as all of the literate texts, irrespective of language.

Explicitation is, among other things, a correlate of the use of modifying elements. In view of the (mode-dependent) tendency to omit such elements while focusing attention on the constitutive (informative) ones, further research may yield two possible correlations, each with direct implications for the effect of the mode of transfer on implicitation / explicitation.
a) between such factors as syntactic complexity and speed of delivery of the source text, on the one hand, and the deletion of modifying elements (including those which serve for explicitation) in the interpreted version, on the other;

b) between the nature of the different cohesive ties and coherence in the source text, on the one hand, and the degree to which these are retained in the interpretation, on the other.

And that is where the thesis finishes, with a call for future research that seems to be still waiting to be done.

Why parts of this research are not important

One of the problems with digging up old research is that your own students might see it and adopt it as a model (let no one ever locate my Honours dissertation!). To counter that possibility, we should note several shortcomings in Shlesinger's research design, most of which are mentioned as such in the text itself. First, most obviously, the categories take in too many linguistic variables to be handled with any ease (or to be explained with consistent clarity). All goes well enough as long as the shifts move in the same direction, but when they do not, how can we say that a "literate decontextualization", for example, is worth more or less than a "literate intensification"? Since the variables cannot be weighted or put into a stable hierarchy, the thing that should be considered remarkable is that, for one text type, they all did move in the same direction (if just one of them had gone the other way, we would have no guarantee that it was not of more importance than all the others combined). Second, the association of variables with (just two) text-type polarities had only been tested for English, and not always with convincing empirical results. Third, there are few keys for explanations, since the identification of a linguistic feature does not provide any guarantee as to its cognitive function. For instance,

> [...] the use of hedges by the (source) speaker may be a means of mitigation, whereas the introduction of the same device by the interpreter may be a means of avoiding a pause while searching for an equivalent. (Shlesinger 1989: 160)

Fourth, the method excludes the possibility of norm-based shifts (essentially by assuming that all the interpreters work in the same small market, so they should all share the same norms of interpreting). And fifth, as mentioned by Shlesinger, the texts selected for analysis did not always live up to the research expectations, particularly in the case of oral texts rendered into Hebrew (the type and the directionality that gives the two "minus literate" findings that mess up the results). For the record, one of those texts (text 5) begins like this:

> Well, a good new [sic] and a bad new [sic].
> The good new is that I am the last one and the bad new is that you have to listen to me yet.

The talk actually becomes quite coherent, and it is the kind of thing that interpreters have to deal with all the time. But this is clearly an L2 or L3 speaker, and that should play havoc with any research that sets out to test hypotheses concerning the "literacy

tradition" of the source text. In this case, the literacy tradition is very likely not to be that of standard L1 English (whatever that is).

I think it would be possible to confirm most of Shlesinger's findings, with some elegance, simply by limiting analysis to explicitation in some more narrowly defined form (cohesion markers, or perhaps lexical expansion). I started doing this for the one truly problematic box in the above grid ("contextualization" for oral texts going from English to Hebrew), but when I got stuck into the above text, I realized there were other things going on, to which we return very soon.

Why this research is important

Despite all those shortcomings, Shlesinger's research is important because, no matter what happens in the case of the oral texts, her findings effectively falsify two proposed universals: adaptation to target-culture literacy (this would be a version of "normalization" for Baker), and explicitation.

Why is that important? Well, it suggests that the universals are at best only universal for written translation. So either they are not really universal, or (conference) interpreting has every right to declare itself a separate field, as an activity regulated by different principles.

The research thus has the potential to sunder apart the entire discipline of Translation Studies. That is not what happened, perhaps because the study was not published as such, but also because Shlesinger took the ultimately political decision to present the use of corpora in Interpreting Studies as an "off-shoot" of corpus-based Translation Studies (see Shlesinger 1998, and on sub-disciplinarity, Shlesinger 2004). She was generous at a moment when she had no intellectual obligation to be.

Perhaps in return for that self-relegation to a sub-discipline, Shlesinger's research was presented as just another piece in the jigsaw of translation universals. At the beginning of this paper we noted the way Mona Baker incorporated Shlesinger's research into her compilation of four potential universals: explicitation, simplification, normalization, and levelling out. Baker obviously simplified Shlesinger's research, failing to mention the mixed findings for the oral texts, and she renamed the universal (proposing "levelling out" instead of Shlesinger's "equalizing" universal). Those things are understandable enough. But how could Baker have completely ignored what Shlesinger found for the literate texts? How could she not have seen that Shlesinger effectively falsified the universal status of at least two of the other three "universals" offered in Baker's own list? As we have noted, Zellermayer's adaptation to target-culture tradition would come under Baker's "normalization", and Blum-Kulka's explicitation hypothesis is the essence of Baker's wider usage of "explication", which indeed explicitly overlaps with the proposed universal of "simplification" (the second of Baker's proposed universals). Shlesinger's findings for the interpreting of literate texts thus contradict those other proposed universals. One must conclude, at least, that the four universals compiled by Baker simply should not have been in the same list together.

Further, if Shlesinger's "equalizing" holds as a potential universal (as Baker seems to accept), then the others surely cannot be universal.

In all, Shlesinger was blithely welcomed into the happy family of potential universalists, joining a coordinated global research project involving corpora, when she had already shown that most of the universals were little better than mode-dependent tendencies.

And there are no universals on the table

I close with a personal point of interest. As we have noted, the really problematic category in Shlesinger's research, the snake in her woodheap, is the variable "contextualization" in the interpreting of the oral English texts into Hebrew. If she had found "+ literate" for that one, virtually all the research expectations would have been met. Shlesinger's hypothesis wanted to find more explicitation in the rendition of those texts (since explicitation makes the text less context-dependent and thus more literate). But what she actually found (pp. 154-156) was a strange mix of implication and missed explicitation. Why should that have been so?

This category includes the L2 or L3 English text we cited above. The interpreter's main problem is actually not so much the level of the English, but the fact that the speaker and the audience all know the subject matter better than she does. There is thus in principle a high degree of context-dependence, with relatively few markers of cohesion. Now, because there are so few markers, and because she lacks knowledge of the context, the interpreter actually misses some of the cohesion patterns, therefore resulting in less explicitation in the rendition. When you are not sure of what is going on, you cannot risk underlining relations that are no more than guesswork. A far better strategy in such situations is to say less, to use superordinates in cases of doubt, and to stay close to the given cues, since even if you don't understand, there is a good chance the audience will. Hence the use of considerable lexical implicitation.

That makes a lot of sense. After all, the tendency to explicitation was, for some researchers, supposed to be in order to help the new receivers compensate for their relative lack of context. In the case of conference interpreting, the receivers may quite often have access to more context than does the interpreter, and implicitation has every reason to become a frequent risk-reducing strategy. In my own haphazard years as an interpreter at medical conferences, one of my favorite pieces of implicitation was the phrase "As you can see on the screen...", to be used whenever I had no idea of what was going on (and all the doctors did indeed seem to understand what was on the screen). Of course, implicitation is also found in written translations (cf. Klaudy 2001; Klaudy & Károly 2003; Pym 2005, and it was called "translation by omission" way back in Pym 1993: 135). But it would seem to correspond particularly well to the kind of asymmetric knowledge distribution likely to occur in interpreted specialized conferences.

Shlesinger suggests that her problems with this particular analysis were due to the inadequate nature of the source text. I suspect, though, that this case has far more to

do with something that is very clear in interpreting but not necessarily specific to the mode. The key factor, I propose, was simply the nature and degree of communicative risk involved, technically the risk of non-cooperation between the communication participants (at this stage we might just use the shorthand "risk of misunderstanding"). In a case of extreme risk (because the interpreter has so many doubts about the source text that no semantic-based risk allocation is possible), explicitation is too risk-laden, and so one logically turns to implicitation.

Similarly for the avoidance of oral and literate extremes in the other cases, since any extreme is likely to involve high risk, and so risk-averse strategies will tend to avoid them.

That is why I am not really surprised to find implicitation in the place where Shlesinger hypothesized explicitation. That is why I do not think the proposed "equalizing universal" really holds as a universal, even if restricted to conference interpreting. And by extension, that is why I suspect that none of the universals proposed by Baker can be completely universal in themselves (since the others were effectively falsified by Shlesinger). Or rather, the universal may be on quite a different level, in the hypothesis that translators and interpreters tend to be risk-averse.

Then again, we will never know much about that possible universal until we offer translators and interpreters proper rewards for taking high communicative risks.

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