Minority Language Dubbing for Children

Screen Translation from German to Irish

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Introduction

The relationship of minority languages to translation is essentially paradoxical. On the one hand, these languages must continually translate from major languages in order to retain ‘their vitality and relevance as living languages’ (Cronin 1995: 89). On the other hand, the practice of translation can pose a threat to ‘the very specificity of those languages that practise it, particularly in situations of diglossia’ (ibid). The Irish language, over the last four hundred years, has become a minority language, which is predominantly source language-intensive in its translation activity, i.e. the main direction of its translations is from other, usually major, languages into Irish. According to Niranjana (1992: 1), there is something fundamentally unbalanced about the dynamic of this kind of translation activity between major and minority languages, due to the ‘asymmetry and inequality of relations between peoples, races, languages’, and this fact distinguishes this kind of translation in some regards from translation between languages of similar status such as French and German, for example.

Because of its crucial importance in terms of language planning and maintenance, children’s literature is one area where, typically, considerable translation activity occurs in source language-intensive minority languages. While the study of the translation of children’s literature is slowly emerging as a growing area of interest for scholarly investigation by translation theorists, the fact that many children now spend considerably more time watching television than they do reading books has not yet resulted in a corresponding shift of the focus of research to the field of screen translation and the linguistic adaptation of children’s audiovisual material. This is particularly regrettable in the case of television programmes translated into minority languages as this type of broadcasting has the potential to play a
crucial role in the survival and growth of these languages through the maintenance and development of children’s linguistic skills.

High-quality animation aimed at an audience of children is expensive to produce but can be bought and rebroadcast in a revoiced version to a second audience for a fraction of the original production cost. Minority-language broadcasters frequently apply screen translation techniques such as narration, voice-over and dubbing to adapt programmes, which originated in a dominant language, for their younger viewers. Frequently, the provision of a target-language voice track is viewed as a largely technical challenge with the result that the totality of the linguistic and language planning implications of the dubbing script translations are overlooked. In general terms, the lack of formal, strategic, coordinated interaction between broadcasters, language planners, terminologists and teachers, on the one hand, and translators, on the other, means that a very valuable opportunity to harness the language development potential of children’s programmes is rarely fully exploited.

As one reads this book, it will become clear that an ad hoc approach to the dubbing of scripts for children, i.e. one which does not involve input from relevant personnel, e.g. educational consultants and terminologists, can result in translations which may be entertaining on a certain level but do not reach their pedagogical potential, especially with regard to the development of more advanced linguistic and cognitive skills. In this context, it should be remembered that delight derived specifically from the clever, original or extravagant use of language can be a major contributory factor to children’s enjoyment of books and television. Consequently, a blandly translated children’s television programme is unlikely to be considered highly entertaining, no matter how competent the translation is in terms of basic narration and plot development.
Constrained translation

The primary focus of this book is an investigation of the main constraints which apply to a quintessentially interdisciplinary project, namely the dubbing of animation for children from a major language (German) to a minority language (Irish). The main disciplines drawn upon are translation studies, screen translation, children’s literature, terminology and minority language studies. By considering the main constraints exercised by the specific, and sometimes competing requirements of translating (a) into a minority language, (b) for the screen (dubbing) and (c) for children, it is hoped to identify the main challenges posed by this type of translation for children and pinpoint the particular constraints within which the screen translator must operate when translating from a dominant to a minority language such as Irish. Of particular interest is the establishment of the interaction of the various competing constraints, which apply in this instance. By observing the translation of LSP terms in the Irish language versions of German children’s animation programmes, it is possible to illustrate the operation of these constraints in an empirical manner. It is hoped that an increased awareness of the hierarchy of constraints relevant to screen translation for children into Irish will contribute to improved standards, both of translation and translation criticism in this area.

The corpus

The corpus used in Chapter Five to illustrate the constraints which apply to dubbing for children into a minority language is what is known as a bilingual, parallel corpus, i.e. a corpus comprising ‘original source texts in language A and their trans-
lated versions in language B’ (Baker 1995: 230). In this case, language A is German and language B is Irish. The source and translated texts are programmes from two series of children’s animation, *Janoschs Traumstunde*.¹ The series were based on the work of the renowned German author and illustrator, Janosch, otherwise known as Horst Eckert.² Born in 1931 in German-speaking Poland, he has authored and/or illustrated more than 190 picture books, as well as a few novels for adults, and has been translated into 147 languages (Stoyan et alia 1998: 122–127). The corpus comprises six source language programmes and their translated versions, making twelve audiovisual texts in all, each with a duration of approximately 27 minutes and amounting to a total of almost six hours of television viewing (see Appendix). The main attraction of parallel corpora over multilingual corpora, i.e. sets of two or more monolingual corpora in different languages, built up on the basis of similar design criteria (Baker 1995: 232), is explained by Shuttleworth (1997: 120) as their capacity to yield information not about the patterns of the target-language but rather of the target language texts under scrutiny, thus providing insight into practices and procedures used by the translator.

**Structure**

Chapter One deals with Irish as a minority language and highlights the fact that while Irish is still spoken as the first language of a small minority within Ireland, it exists side by side with English, which is now a world language. The chapter shows how

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¹ Between 1986–1990, the German regional television station WDR broadcast a highly successful home-produced series of children’s animation entitled *Janoschs Traumstunde* in 26 episodes, which was later sold to many other countries including Japan and the USA (Heidtmann 1990: 423).

² The life and works of Janosch are the subject of a critical study by Dietrich (1992).
native speakers’ use of the Irish language continues to decline as industrial development brings English into areas that were traditionally Irish-speaking. It is argued that in such a situation, Irish is only likely to be passed on to the next generation of native speakers if all available means are harnessed and utilised to stop the trend towards language shift and if the use of Irish can be stabilised in certain domains. Particular attention is paid to the traditional and contemporary importance of translation in maintaining the vitality of Irish and other minority languages while the inherent dangers of reliance on such forms of language mediation are also discussed. The pressing need for Irish to attempt to keep abreast of new developments through the systematic coinage and dissemination of new terminology is stressed and some of the obstacles which frustrate this process are described. Finally, the crucial importance for the maintenance and development of the Irish language of strengthening the younger generation’s grasp of the language, through both the translation of foreign children’s books and the dubbing of children’s television programmes, is underscored.

Chapter Two provides a comprehensive introduction to the field of revoicing while concentrating, in the main, on aspects of dubbing. The various approaches and technologies involved in dubbing are described. The traditions and practices adopted in different countries and the range of choices and constraints which apply to screen translation are presented and discussed in the context of such factors as target audience, genre and language pair. This information provides the background required to understand why dubbing is the method of screen translation used in Ireland to supplement the provision of home-produced programmes for children in Irish. Finally, the specific procedure used in the dubbing of the corpus into Irish is described.

In Chapter Three, dubbing synchrony is reviewed critically. Too often literature on dubbing emphasises the importance of lip synchrony as if it were always of paramount importance. But here consideration is also given to other kinds of visual synchrony such as syllable synchrony, isochrony or kinetic synchrony.
Attention is also drawn to the importance of audio and semantic synchrony which are frequently glossed over in research on dubbing. The synchrony issues discussed in this chapter provide a context in which the types of challenges posed and procedures adopted by the dubbers of *Janoschs Traumstunde* described in Chapter Five can be situated. It is argued that a higher standard of dubbing could be achieved if screen translators were to receive formal training in aspects of screen writing, especially the drafting of convincing dialogue.

Chapter Four is devoted to issues relating to translating for children. Taking research on children’s literature as the starting-point and moving on to recent work on the translation of both written and audiovisual texts for children, the relatively low esteem in which works for children are held is highlighted. The main distinctive features of texts written specifically for children are described and the importance of their reproduction in translation is emphasised. The power and impact of new text types communicated via television, cinema and video is underscored and it is asserted that children’s programmes have become partial substitutes for storybooks. As such, they have acquired an importance in relation to language development and maintenance, especially in minority-language cultures, which may not be fully appreciated and understood, even by the translators of such material.

In Chapter Five, a selection of passages from six original episodes of the German *Janoschs Traumstunde* and the corresponding Irish-language translated versions from *Scéalaíocht Janosch* are presented together with a commentary. The main focus of the linguistic commentary in this chapter is the extent to which lexical features of the source text are simplified and/or normalised in the corresponding target text translation in line with claims made by some Descriptive Translation Studies

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3 These episodes were first broadcast in Germany in 1988–90 by West Deutsche Rundfunk (WDR).
4 These episodes were first broadcast in Ireland in 1989–90 by Radio Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ), Ireland’s national broadcasting organisation.
scholars concerning the existence of distinctive features of translation. The commentary is intended as an illustration of the way in which the various types of constraints discussed in Chapters One, Two, Three and Four influence the translation outcome in this instance. Of particular interest is the extent to which these constraints can account for the pronounced lexical simplification of the target text.

Research of the kind outlined above has the potential to add to our knowledge regarding the particular translation practices and procedures used by the translators of audiovisual texts into minority languages. In recent years, the scope for the exploitation of parallel corpora using specially designed software has become obvious (Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 120) but manual investigation of the kind described here, however modest, can in itself still yield valuable insights as well as pointing to other worthwhile objects of further investigation. As Toury (1978: 93) observes, whether manual or computerised techniques are used, there is little point in comparing source and target texts in an attempt to determine whether some idealistic notion of equivalence through translation has been achieved. What is of real interest to DTS scholars is rather to discover what type and/or what degree of equivalence actually pertains between specific source texts and their translations. This can be assisted through the kind of focused small-scale study of limited corpora undertaken here until it eventually becomes possible to combine research findings across cultures and languages to create an informed picture of what, if any, are core features of translation activity.

Theoretical frameworks

Since the 1970s, a new trend has emerged within the discipline of translation studies, which emphasises the importance of an empirical, descriptive approach and is primarily target text-
orientated. The name commonly given to this new strand is Descriptive Translation Studies. DTS has its origins in a paper of seminal importance delivered by James S. Holmes at the Third International Congress of Applied Linguistics held in Copenhagen in 1972. The paper, entitled ‘The Name and Nature of Translation Studies’, proposed a model of the discipline that distinguished between Theoretical Translation Studies, on the one hand, and Descriptive Translation Studies, on the other. According to Holmes (1988: 71),5 the aim of DTS should be to describe ‘the phenomenon of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience’. This emphasis on the examination of real translations, as opposed to the pursuit of idealistic translation goals, was soon taken up by a number of scholars, most notably Gideon Toury (1995: 1), who argues that detailed studies of actual translations and well-defined corpora constitute ‘the best means of testing, refuting and especially modifying and amending the very theory, in which terms research is carried out’.

Within this new framework, identifying examples of untranslatability becomes redundant as researchers’ attention turns to investigations of the ways in which each individual target culture influences and places constraints on the task of the translator at any given time (Øverås 1998: 572). From the outset, DTS acknowledged that its goals could only be achieved by modest means over time, i.e. as a result of the gradual accumulation of descriptive research based on bodies of authentic translated texts (Toury 1995: 11).

A colleague of Toury’s, I. Even-Zohar (1978a, 1978b, 1990) is credited with developing the idea of literature as a polysystem and first applying it to translation. A polysystem is, in effect, an open, dynamic system of heterogeneous, interrelated systems which are constantly transforming themselves and shifting their

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5 The paper did not appear in print until 1988 when a posthumous collection of papers by James S. Holmes entitled Translated! Papers on Literary Translation and Translation and Translation Studies was published by Rodopi in Amsterdam.
positions in relation to each other. In any polysystem, there is constant tension between ‘the center (which dictates norms and models to the entire polysystem) and the periphery, between the canonized system (which usually occupies the center of the polysystem) and non-canonized, between the systems of adult and children’s literature, between translated and non-translated literature’ (Weissbrod 1998: 36, her emphasis). From this perspective, the importance of studying not just texts but also the range of factors that govern their production, promotion and reception becomes clear (Aaltonen 1996: 56).

The interest of polysystem theorists in such factors as the relative position and status of particular translations within the polysystem has helped to counteract the traditional view of translations as inherently inferior and peripheral in relation to original literature. Indeed, the polysystem approach shows that while translations generally occupy a marginal position within a literary system, this position can shift, since the overall polysystem is a dynamic entity, and translations may acquire greater importance in certain circumstances. Examples of how translations can acquire greater status, quoted by Even-Zohar (1990: 46–48), include the case of translations into Hebrew in the early part of the 20th century which were intended to supplement and stimulate original literary output in Hebrew during that period. A more contemporary example is provided by the Irish situation where Irish translations of television programmes for children, e.g. dubbed versions of French and German animation, are more numerous, acquire a higher status and are closer to the centre of Irish children’s literary, educational and audiovisual polysystems than similar television programmes in major European language cultures where more original language material is produced.

The other two examples of how translations may move closer to the centre provided by Even-Zohar (ibid) are firstly, when the original literature within the system already occupies a weak position, as in the case of a small culture dominated by a larger, stronger one, and secondly, at certain crisis points within the polysystem, such as when older, established models no longer meet the culture’s needs, and translation is resorted to in
order to introduce new foreign models. Minority language screen translation in Ireland provides a good example of this phenomenon with new, urgently needed models of multimedia orality being imported through translation.

**Norms**

Central to the whole polysystem approach to DTS is the concept of translation norms (Toury 1978, 1980, 1991, 1995). These socio-cultural constraints are located in the middle of the continuum which runs from strict rules to individual idiosyncratic practices (Toury 1995: 54) and can be seen as those strategies which are repeatedly adopted, in preference to other possible strategies, within a particular cultural or textual system (Baker 1993: 240). Translation norms are further understood to be ‘independent of systemic differences between SL and TL, and are not determined by the ST’ (Overås 1998: 573). At any given time within a particular system, some norms will be of greater importance than others but any such situation is always subject to change.

Furthermore, norms may vary from one culture to another, within the same culture, from one generation to another and so on. For example, literary norms relating to translation for adults are often at variance with those relating to children within the same culture. In the case of the subsystem of children’s literature, if there is a clash between the norms of the SL and TL literature,

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6 In the course of the 1990s, other theorists such as Chesterman (1993), Hermans (1996, 1999), Nord (1991, 1997), Weissbrod (1992) and Lefevere (1992) have added to, critiqued and further developed the Tourian concept of norms.

7 Puurtinen (1997) has observed changes in Finnish norms relating to original works and translations for children. She found that recently published original books in Finnish do not conform to the established TL norm of widespread use of finite constructions and instead approximate to contemporary translations that tend to favour non-finite constructions.
the latter are usually conformed to quite dramatically. Thus many translated works for children are presented unashamedly as adaptations and/or abridgments while this is far less acceptable within the same cultures when translating adult literature. The need for translators to be aware of prevalent norms is clear though knowledge of those norms does not imply automatic adherence to them. For example, a translator may, like those who argue for foreignising strategies (Venuti 1992: 1–17), deliberately choose to contravene norms.

Norms affect the cultural process of translation over and above the actual textual act of translation in itself. For example, in relation to children’s literature, norms influence such issues as which texts get translated in the first place and from which source languages and cultures. Thus norms may be seen both as a category of descriptive analysis of translation phenomena (Toury 1978: 91) and as providing a functional, socio-historical basis for the structure of the discipline (Lambert quoted in Baker 1993: 240).

Toury (1978: 96) claims that the more frequently a phenomenon such as a shift from adequate (ST orientated) to acceptable (TT orientated) translation occurs, the more likely it is that this shift represents a basic norm within the given polysystem. However, together with others such as Blum-Kulka (1986), Toury suggests that those translation shifts, which occur with very high frequency across different language pairs, may, in fact, not be motivated by the polysystem within which they manifest themselves. They may, rather, be examples of what are known as universals rather than norms. Baker (1993: 242) describes universals as products of ‘constraints which are inherent in the translation process itself’. They consequently do not vary across cultures, whereas norms are ‘translation features that have been observed to occur consistently in certain types of translation within a particular socio-cultural and historical context’ (ibid).  

8 This point is elaborated upon in Chapter Four on Translating for Children.
9 According to Kenny, ‘universals are not just norms that allow no deviation. They are relatable to cognitive factors rather than social ones’ (2000: 93).
Already the research findings of some quite limited studies have thrown up sufficient evidence to threaten the status of some posited universals. Toury (1978), Blum-Kulka (1986: 21) and Baker (1993, 1995) consider explication\(^\text{10}\) a candidate for the status of a universal. However, Weissbrod (1992: 153) has conducted research which challenges this view:

Explicitation in translation is not, as previous research has suggested, solely a universal tendency or a function of translation on a literacy/orality scale. It is norm-dependent and thus changes with historical circumstances and according to the position of the translated literature within the target culture.

Even using computerised corpora and other techniques to provide convincing empirical data concerning the existence of universals, as opposed to norms, it will be some time before a sufficient volume of research can be conducted across a wide enough range of languages and text types, to resolve satisfactorily the issue of universals versus norms (Toury 1978: 96).

The realisation that certain linguistic features appear with regularity in many translated texts and that it is difficult to explain them simply in terms of source and target text and/or language, has given rise to the concept of translation as a third code. The term third code was coined by William Frawley (1984: 168), who claims that translation is ‘essentially a third code which arises out of the bilateral consideration of the matrix and target codes: it is, in a sense, a sub-code of each of the codes involved’.\(^\text{11}\)

According to Øverås (1998: 586), the third code appears to consist of a series of distinctive features which occur to a greater

\(^{10}\) Baker (1996) and Weissbrod (1992) refer to explicitation as opposed to explication although both words are used to refer to the same kinds of phenomenon. I will use the latter in all cases for the sake of simplicity.

\(^{11}\) This view of translation as constituting a sub-language of sorts is related to, but should not be confused with, the concept of translationese. While the term, the third code, is simply descriptive, translationese is used to refer to features of translated text which are evaluated negatively and can be explained in terms of the translator’s ‘inexperience or lack of competence in the target language’ (Baker 1993: 243).
or lesser extent in individual translations. Amongst the features she identifies are:

a high level of cohesive explicitness combined with a specific type of distribution of exotic features (Baker 1993), a low degree of lexical repetition (ibid), a relative absence of colloquialism (Gellerstam 1986) as well as occasional metaphor (Koller 1988) (ibid).

Although all these individual features and sub-combinations also appear in native texts, Øverås argues that they may constitute ‘parameters within which to identify a text as a translation’ (ibid).

Other characteristic features frequently associated with translated texts include normalisation, levelling out and simplification. A feature described under one heading by some researchers might arguably also appear under another. For example, Baker (1996: 186) points out that simplification is sometimes linked to explicitness in that it involves:

making things easier for the reader (but not necessarily more explicit), but it does tend to involve also selecting an interpretation and blocking other interpretations, and in this sense it raises levels of explicitness by resolving ambiguity.

Normalisation is usually used in discussions of universals in a fairly specific sense (Baker 1996: 183) but could be taken as a blanket term together with simplification to cover most of the above features. As regards defining what exactly we mean by the names we give different manifestations of characteristic translation features, Baker (1996: 180) observes:

the process of refining the definition will go hand in hand with that of verifying the feature: definition and verification are interdependent in the sense that it is only by investigating the various concrete manifestations of these abstract notions that we will be able to refine the concepts themselves.
Explication

Explication has been described by Blum-Kulka (1986: 21) as the process whereby ‘the translator simply expands the TL text, building into it a semantic redundancy absent in the original’. Some of the more typical forms of explication found in translation as outlined by Weissbrod (1992: 153) are (a) replacing proforms with nouns, (b) changing metaphors into similes, thereby making the implicit comparison explicit and (c) filling in ellipsis and adding conjunctions. This tendency to make explicit in the translation what is implicit in the source text is thought to underlie the common observation that translations tend to be longer than originals regardless of the language pair involved. However, Weissbrod (1992: 154) sees explication depending on the relative position on the oral/literacy scale of the language pair in question:

since due to historical circumstances, English is a more literate language than Hebrew, translations from Hebrew to English tend to explicitate the source texts while translations from English to Hebrew tend to implicitate them (ibid).

She argues (ibid: 155) that such a view makes it possible to explain variations in relation to explication in different literary systems and/or at different times. This concept of oral/literacy scale might well prove useful in investigations of translations into Irish since Irish, like Hebrew, has an oral culture which is more developed than its written tradition.

Translators’ widespread use of explication is thought to be motivated by a wish to mediate and draw out the source text meaning for the readers of the translation (Baker 1993: 243, Shuttleworth and Cowie 1997: 55). However well intentioned a translator’s basic motivation in the adoption of this strategy may be, it has been viewed critically by some commentators especially in relation to literary translation:

All too often, translators will incorporate into the text their own processing activities: solving the problems, reducing polyvalence, explaining away any
discrepancies or discontinuities, and so forth. Soon the receivers of the translation find their mental tasks pre-empted. Translators must instead analyze both the text and the range of plausible receiver reactions, in order to preserve as much of that range as possible (de Beaugrande and Dressler 1983: 217).

Intuition would suggest that explication, while quite common in literary translation, for example, is unlikely to emerge as a characteristic feature of screen translation because of the strength of time constraints in dubbing and space constraints in subtitling. However, it is clear that there may be some scope for the dubbing translator, like the interpreter, to explicate particular comments, pieces of information or aspects of plot at the expense of others, providing that this does not give rise to any gross clashes of visual or other synchrony. Interestingly, a study conducted by Goris (1993: 169–190) of the dubbing into French of three English-language and two Flemish films revealed a marked tendency towards explication. He found multiple examples of vague expressions being fleshed out or made more precise, logical links being made more explicit as well as many cases where internal references were added and visual information was explicited textually in the dubbed versions (ibid: 182–185). Another example of explication in dubbed material is provided by Zabalbeascoa (1997: 327–342). Emphasising the need to interpret both visual and linguistic signs in dubbing texts, he describes how explication may be essential in cases where nonverbal information, which is source culture-specific, would otherwise be inaccessible to the target audience.

12 See Chapter Three on Synchrony.
13 Preliminary research findings from Shlesinger (1995: 210) indicate that explication is a feature of simultaneous and consecutive interpreting even though time constraints clearly also apply to this kind of translation.
Normalisation

Normalisation is described by Baker (1996: 183) as a tendency ‘to exaggerate features of the target language and to conform to its typical patterns’. She explains that it is usually manifest through ‘the use of typical grammatical structures, punctuation and collocational patterns or clichés’ and may be less likely to occur where the source text and language enjoy a relatively high status. Examples cited in recent research include shifts from original to conventional collocations in the translations of both Norwegian and English novels (Øverås 1996, 1998) and a similar shift from creative to standard forms in the translation of compound nouns found in contemporary novels written in German (Kenny 2000). These corpus-based findings are in line with Vanderauwera’s earlier observations based on manual analysis concerning the tendency of Dutch novels translated into English to display a certain ‘reserve in rendering unusual and mannered imagery and word choice in the target language’ (1985: 108). This, she suggests, results from the translator’s understanding of norms in the target literary system relating to translated literature, in general, and translation from minority languages, in particular. Shlesinger (1991: 150) observes that interpreters ended sentences in the TL which in the SL were incomplete, and they did not translate typical oral discourse features such as false starts and hesitations even when these were used deliberately.

Goris (1993), in his analysis of French dubbing, uses the term linguistic standardisation in relation to features of dubbed texts which are covered by normalisation and levelling out. His examples cover the replacement of features of regional dialect and idiolect which occur in the originals with standardised language (ibid: 174–177). In the Scéalaíocht Janosch dubbed translations discussed in detail in Chapter Five, there are many examples of incomplete sentences spoken in the source text

14 A good illustration of this is provided by Herbst (1994: 263–267) in his account of the dubbing of Shakespeare into German.
being rounded off in translation and these could be viewed as examples of normalisation.

**Levelling out**

Levelling out, according to Baker (1996: 184), concerns 'the tendency of translated text to gravitate towards the centre of a continuum. Unlike normalisation [...] the process of levelling out is neither target-language nor source-language dependent'. Thus we may expect translated texts in a translation corpus to display less variation than texts in a corpus of original texts (ibid: 177). An example of this phenomenon which might be relevant to dubbing comes from research which found that simultaneous interpreting:

> 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. (Shlesinger 1989: 96).

Herbst (1997: 294) has observed that film dialogue in general exhibits certain features, e.g. complete grammatical sentences, no false starts, which are more typical of written discourse, or at least of some kind of idealised dialogue, than they are of real speech. One of the main reasons for this is that film dialogue is first committed to paper and only later is it performed orally by actors. As a result, at least some features of written language typically slip into the language of film. When the original script is recast in translation there is, in theory at least, a second opportunity to incorporate convincing features of spoken language into the target language text. Where this does not happen, the translation of dubbing scripts can be seen as another example of levelling out as it inhabits the no man's land of film dialogue located somewhere between authentic speech and written prose. Goris (1993: 173–174) describes cases where the original film scripts exhibit a multiplicity of features such as elision and contraction that are indicative of spoken English and Flemish.
But the dubbed French versions have characters speaking standardised French to the point where the only two concessions to the original versions were ‘the elision of the final vowel of the personal pronoun before the initial character of the verb (t’as, t’entends, t’écoutais, t’es) and the omission of the first part of the negation ne...pas...’ (ibid: 174). Goris supports Herbst’s point when he states that the effect of this is quite serious since:

the object of this type of intervention is already standardized to a certain extent: the original dialogues are based on a written script and therefore lack the frequent stops, hesitations, false starts, repetitions and unfinished phrases of ‘genuine’ spoken language (ibid).

**Simplification**

Simplification is nothing more than ‘the tendency to simplify the language used in translation’ (Baker 1996: 181) without necessarily making it more explicit (ibid: 182) and to date, researchers have uncovered evidence of simplification of syntax, style and lexis. Thus the term can refer to the outcome of a variety of translation strategies.\footnote{Lexical simplification as a target text outcome resulting from various translation strategies used to render *Janoschs Traumstunde* into Irish, is addressed in detail in Chapter Five.} Examples of stylistic simplification include such practices as reducing or omitting source text repetitions\footnote{This could also be an example of lexical simplification.} (Blum-Kulka and Levenston 1993, Shlesinger 1991). Syntactic simplification can, for example, be achieved by replacing non-finite with finite constructions (Vanderauwera 1985), breaking up long sentences into shorter ones (Laviosa-Braithwaite 1996) and omitting modifying phrases and words or adding punctuation to clarify meanings (Malmkjæer 1997).

Lexical simplification is a marked feature of the translations in the *Janosch* corpus and forms the focus of the case study in Chapter Five. According to Blum-Kulka and Levenston (1983: 119), it can be best described simply as the process and/or result...
of making do with fewer words. Lexical simplification may be observed to operate both qualitatively and quantitatively in the process of translation. Considerable progress in respect of the latter may be expected in the future due to possibilities opened up by computerised tools, developed for use within corpus linguistics. These tools can be usefully applied to investigate the simplification of lexis within texts, e.g. by analysing the lexical density and type-token ratio of selected passages or whole texts within a DTS corpus. Lexical density indicates the percentage of lexical, as opposed to grammatical, words in a text. It is measured by dividing the number of lexical words, e.g. nouns, adjectives and verbs, by the total number of words in the text. The result is then multiplied by 100 to express it as a percentage (Stubbs 1986: 34–35). According to Baker (1995: 237), ‘lexical words are generally “about” something and typically comprise items which belong to categories such as nouns, adjectives and verbs. Grammatical words belong to closed sets such as determiners and prepositions’. Low lexical density, which is characteristic of spoken language, is associated with greater redundancy and hence ease of processing and may be a characteristic feature of translation (Baker 1996: 183). Lexical density appears to be associated with information load, e.g. the amount of technical vs. general vocabulary in a text, the percentage of old and new information, the overall length and amount of detail contained in a given text. Therefore, lower lexical density in translations could well be evidence of a deliberate or subconscious attempt on the part of the translator to control information load or, in other words, make the translated text more accessible through simplification (Baker 1995: 237). As such, it could be expected to feature in major language translations for children into Irish, where the target group’s vocabulary is limited as a result of the restriction of the minority language to certain domains such as home and/or school.

The type-token ratio is an expression of the range of vocabulary in a text. Each orthographic word in a text may be referred to as a token while any particular word-form such as book is said to be a type. Thus, the sentence *The cat sat on*
the mat has five types, e.g. the, cat, sat, on, and mat but six tokens since the occurs twice. The type-token ratio of the sentence is thus 5:6, which is very high and reflects the considerable variation of vocabulary within this short sentence. The occurrence of a lower type-token ratio in a translation than is found in the source text may also be taken to be an indication of lexical simplification (Baker 1995: 236). The lower the type-token ratio of a text, i.e. the less variation there is in vocabulary, the easier it is likely to be to process it. If we accept that ease of processing is extremely important for children, it follows that texts for younger target audiences should generally have relatively lower type-token ratios. If the texts are aural or audiovisual where there may be no opportunity to recapitulate, then a limited lexical range can contribute significantly to good comprehensibility. On the other hand, if texts for children are to serve a useful function in terms of the development of their language skills and their vocabulary range in particular, there is also a case to be made for generating texts with higher type-token ratios.

This introduction has provided a brief introduction to the DTS approach which underpins the investigation of lexical simplification in minority language dubbing for children discussed in Chapter Five. The concept of norms and universals in relation to translation polysystems was discussed, as was the possible existence of a third code. While it is too early to determine the validity of the idea of universals, it was shown that certain characteristic features of translations such as explication, normalisation, levelling-out and simplification can be identified across a

17 Specific aspects of ease of processing which have been studied in relation to children's texts include readability, also called comprehensibility (Puurtinen 1995: 23) and speakability (Snell-Hornby 1988: 35), i.e. the suitability of a text to be read aloud.

18 Of course, some such texts, e.g. audio- and video cassettes can be stopped and rewound but ideally all children’s texts should be comprehensible on first hearing/sight.
range of translations from and into many different languages. These features have all been cited by translation scholars as possible candidates for the status of universals and were therefore reviewed in some detail and illustrated with examples from various types of translation including dubbing. Two of these characteristics in particular, namely simplification and normalisation, and the ways in which the use of these strategies can result in lexical simplification in translations, are analysed in detail in the case study in Chapter Five.

In order to understand the context in which the translators of Janoschs Traumstunde chose to use these strategies so widely, it is important to investigate

a) the problems and challenges experienced by Irish as a minority language (Chapter One),

b) how and why the programmes in question were dubbed into Irish (Chapters Two and Three) and

c) key issues relating to writing and translating for children (Chapter Four).