



UDC 81'25=111

Original scientific article

Received on 20.03. 2013

Accepted for publication on 16.10. 2013

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The role of collaborative translation protocols (CTPs) in translation studies

There are two generally accepted approaches to research into translation: product-oriented and process-oriented ones (Kussmaul 1995: 5). While the first primarily deals with the results of the translation process, the process-oriented approach provides an insight into the cognitive aspect of the translation process itself. There have been numerous studies into various forms of process-oriented tasks. However, not many of them investigated the method known as “collaborative translation protocols (CTPs)”, which provides extensive material for the analysis of many linguistic aspects of the translation process.

Key words: translation studies; collaborative translation protocols; syntactic problems; directionality; bilingual processing; L1 translation; L2 translation.

1. Introduction

Translation is not just an exchange of words and structures, but a communicative process that includes the reader of the translation within a particular situation within a specific culture. House (2000: 150) points out that, in using the term “process of translation”, “we must [...] keep in mind that we are dealing here not with an isolable process but rather with a *set* of processes, a *complex series* of problem-solving and decision-making processes.”

The analysis of translation processes becomes an even more important issue in the countries where less widely disseminated languages are spoken, where particular attention should be made to the notion of directionality. For a very long period of time directionality had been neglected, if not completely ignored, by traditional translation studies in the sense that translation into a non-mother tongue was com-



pletely rejected and disapproved of. This position of directionality in terms of translating into the non-mother tongue had been so to say “cemented” until the 1990s when the call appeared by various scholars who were prepared to tackle this tradition.

As Beeby Lonsdale (1998: 63) explains, “directionality” refers to the fact that translations can be done from a foreign language into a mother tongue or vice versa. Pavlovic (2008: 81) claims that the traditional view of translation theorists regarding directionality is probably best reflected in the following (in)famous statement by Newmark (1988: 3): “translat(ing) into your language of habitual use [...] is the only way you can translate naturally, accurately and with maximum effectiveness.” Newmark, being an advocate of translation into the mother tongue (L1 translation), completely dismisses the practice of translation into a foreign language (L2 translation).

However, there are opposite views as well. Campbell (1998: 4) states that “L2 translation becomes as normal and possibly as widespread as translation into the first language.” As the linguistic situation and modern communication change, the everyday life sets some new guidelines and the traditional view must be challenged.

Prunč (1997: 6, cited in Grosman 2000: 22) has launched an interesting attack on the theories holding that only native speakers qualify as translators, whereas translation into non-mother tongues should be questionable, pointing out that such theories are in conflict with the existing practices. Prunč also believes that the idealized concept of the target speaker’s perfect linguistic competence as implied by such theories is often unrealistic. Perfectly aware of the translation situation of the less widely disseminated languages or languages of limited diffusion (LLDs), Prunč calls for a realistic theory that could accommodate the specific situation in the communities where such languages are spoken, and provide an efficient basis for both the education of future translators and the development of a translation culture. Other translation theorists and scholars have joined Prunč’s challenge of the soundness of a translation theory out of accord with current practices.

2. Research into translation process

2.1. *Think-aloud protocols*

Think-aloud protocols, also known as concurrent verbal reports, are a method of data collection in which the subjects are asked to “think aloud,” i.e. to verbalize



their thoughts concurrently with cognitive processing (Ericsson and Simon 1984/1993: xiii, cited in Pavlovic 2007: 39). This method has faced both approval and criticism.

The analysis of think-aloud protocols (TAPs) in translation studies began in Europe in the late 1980s. Kussmaul (1995: 177) explains that this new method of research was developed since empirical and inductive methods were necessary to complement the deductive and often normative models of the translation process.

According to Kussmaul (1995: 5) there are two approaches in teaching and analyzing translation, product-oriented and process-oriented ones. The product-oriented approach includes error analysis and translation quality assessment. The process-oriented approach provides an insight into the translation process itself and the cognitive efforts made by people who perform translation tasks. Although methodological and theoretical frameworks for the study of the processes of translating and interpreting have improved, only a small number of experimental studies have been published on process-oriented research in translation (see Tirkkonen-Condit and Jääskeläinen 2000; Alves 2003; Göpferich, Alves and Mees 2010).

A process-oriented approach has been developed in order to gain more immediate access to the translator's mind. By adopting introspective methods from psychology, experiments have been carried out in which translators were asked to utter everything that went on in their minds while they were translating, and these monologues were tape recorded. These monologues are referred to as "think-aloud protocols (TAPs)" (Kussmaul 1995: 7). These protocols have been analyzed in order to classify translation strategies, with the pedagogical aim of observing difficulties that students encounter while translating.

The most frequent method used in TAPs consists of monologue protocols (experiments with one subject). Kussmaul and Tirkkonen-Condit (1995: 180) state that monologue protocols are still predominantly the main tool for gaining access to the translation process. However, some arguments have been given against them such as the fact that subjects often tend to stop verbalizing. In the last twenty years the value of TAPs has been questioned. Monologue protocols contain a large amount of descriptive talk and long stretches of silence (pauses). In addition to that, the processes leading up to the decisions are often not verbalized.

Dialogue protocols may provide the solution to these problems. The fact that in dialogue protocols a standard communicative situation occurs (questions are asked and answered, certain solutions are discussed, accepted or rejected, etc.) guarantees that verbalization will constantly flow. However, it is evident that dialogue proto-



cols are not free from problems, as there are arguments that we observe and register the thoughts which would have not occurred to a single translator. Kussmaul (1995: 181) states that this is true, but emphasizes that even if we use monologue protocols, our aim is to draw conclusions based on observations of a set of individual minds.

Kussmaul (1995: 183) claims that TAP data provides rich material which we can use to test a variety of hypotheses and pursue research with a variety of aims. It also provides a valuable insight into the study of identification of problems, solution to problems, associations, corrections, the usage of dictionaries, etc. Künzli (2009: 327) claims that think-aloud protocols of translation processes are a useful tool for investigating the linguistic aspect of translation. Pavlovic (2007: 45) claims that naturally occurring instances of collaborative translation would provide a possible source of authentic data.

2.2. Collaborative translation protocols (CTPs)

Protocols involving more than one person have been termed “joint translation protocols” or, in the case of pairs working together on a task, “dialogue protocols”. Pavlovic (2007: 46) proposes a common term for the method: “collaborative translation protocols” (CTPs). These protocols are a product of collaborative translation tasks, i.e. those tasks in which a pair or group of people translate the same source text together, basing their decisions on mutual consensus. In such tasks, the understanding of the source text meaning and the creation of the target text occur after individual cognitive processing and the interaction among the members of the group.

Pavlovic (2007: 47) claims that collaborative translation protocols are not think-aloud protocols in the strict sense as they include both social interaction and thinking aloud and as subjects verbalize their thoughts spontaneously, testing different ideas. This method has its own disadvantages, such as a considerable degree of rationalization (subjects justify their decisions, explain their choices, etc.) or the dependence on the interpersonal relations between the subjects. Kussmaul (1995: 11–12) warns that one of the subjects may become a leader “not because of his or her superior capabilities, but because of personality features” or that a subject may “hold back his or her ideas for reasons of politeness.” Therefore the CTP data must be complemented with introspective data. This will provide us with an opportunity to capture subjects’ personal opinion on the atmosphere during the translation tasks.



3. Research design and methodology

3.1. Setting and participants

The research study took place at the end of the summer semester of the academic year 2010/2011, at the English Language and Literature Department, Faculty of Philosophy, Tuzla University. Two source texts (STs), one in English and one in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (B/C/S), were chosen and the subjects who were recruited for the study were “novices” in translation. Two sets of subjects took part in the research study: thirteen subjects (three groups of three and one group of four) participated in collaborative translation sessions, which were the central part of the study and another eleven students took part in the control research study aimed at comparing collaborative and individual translation.

3.2. Research design

In the central part of the study, a series of translation tasks were conducted in which a set of subjects were asked to fill out a pre-translation questionnaire and then collaboratively translate two source texts. This was followed by a post-translation questionnaire. The collaborative sessions were audio-recorded. Later, the collaborative translation protocols obtained from the sessions were transcribed and coded. The target texts (translations) were collected and given to the external evaluator for evaluation.

The evaluator was instructed to “revise” the translations in two ways (the system was taken from Pavlovic 2007). Red cards (RC) were used to mark parts of the target text that were considered unacceptable (either because they distort the evaluator's perception of the plausible interpretation of the source text, or because they contain an unambiguous target language error of whatever kind). Yellow cards (YC) were used to indicate parts of text which could benefit from revision. To facilitate quantitative comparison, “red cards” were counted as one negative point and “yellow cards” as half a point. The negative points were added up and the “revisability scores” compared among the groups and individuals.

Control translation tasks were conducted with a set of comparable subjects, who were asked to translate individually the same two source texts at home. They were instructed to accompany their translations by Integrated Problem and Decision Reports (IPDRs). The control-group subjects were asked to fill out the same pre- and post-translation questionnaires that were used in the main research study. Their translations were evaluated according to the same criteria as the translations from the main group. Introspective data from the IPDRs was used to obtain additional



information.

Göpferich (2010: 6) claims “quantitative and qualitative analyses of how novices try to solve translation problems and of the shortcomings which can be observed in these problem-solving processes will form the empirical basis on which suggestions for the translation classroom will be founded.” All the research data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively and the findings were triangulated since triangulation, i.e. the investigation of one and the same phenomenon by means of different complementary data sources, is generally considered to enhance the trustworthiness of findings in the translation process (see Alves 2003; Göpferich 2010).

4. Research results and discussion

Quantitative analysis included mathematical and descriptive statistical procedures. The subjects’ satisfaction with their products, processes and group interactions, their attitudes towards directionality of translation, collaborative work, the difficulty of the translation tasks, etc. were measured on a numerical scale from 1 to 5. Number of problems, tentative solutions, spontaneous solutions, verbalizations, red and yellow cards, revisability scores, etc. were counted. Quantitative and qualitative methods have been combined so that the findings would be more solid and comprehensive.

As the translation process is perceived as a problem-solving activity, the main part of the research included the analysis of problems perceived by the subjects. The definition for translation problem has been taken from Livbjerg and Mees (2003: 129) who defined *translation problem* “from the perspective of the participating subjects” as “any word or phrase in the text, or any aspect of such a word or phrase, which is verbalized by any single participant and for which he or she expresses any degree of doubt about its proper translation.”

There were instances where a problem was clearly identified by the participating subjects, as is the case in the following example:

(1) ST segment: *Most of us are unaware that Celts ...*

V: *Većina nas nije svjesna činjenice ‘most of us are unaware of the fact’, kako ćemo ovo ‘how shall we do this’ Celts?*

However, there were also instances where the existence of a translation problem was not explicitly stated but rather inferred, for example from the fact that the subjects proposed more than one translation solution for one ST element:



(2) ST segment: *Calling them Celts makes sense ...*

A: *So, nazivati ih Keltima ...*

M: **Ima smisla 'makes sense'**

A: *Nazivati ih Keltima ima smisla ... can we find the word for makes sense?*

A: **Smišljeno, smisleno** 'devised, calculated, premeditated', *hmmhmmh, I'm still thinking.*

M: *Maybe we put some type of linking here, tako da nazivati ih Keltima ... čini se smislenim* 'therefore, calling them Celts seems sensible'

Also, a translation problem was signaled when, after a single tentative solution was proposed, one of the subjects expressed uncertainty regarding that suggestion.

(3) ST segment: *Calling them Celts makes sense ...*

M: *Tako da nazivati ih Keltima ... ima smisla*

A: *I don't think ... I don't think we should start the sentence with tako 'thus, therefore', do you know what I mean, do you agree?*

4.1. Syntactic problems

Syntactic problems indicate uncertainty regarding the relations among the words in the sentence (for example order of sentence elements, word order within sentence elements, the choice of active versus passive, plural versus singular, emphasis, the usage of tenses and articles).

4.1.1. Examples from L1 translation (translation from English)

(4) ST segment: *The word "Celtic" comes from the Greek Keltoi, first appearing in the sixth century to describe "barbarians" living inland from the Mediterranean Sea.*

a. L: **Da opiše 'to describe'** ... *da opiše.*

M: *Maybe, kojom bi se 'by which it', da bi opisala 'to describe'...*

A: **Or opisujući 'describing'**, *to describe.*

M: *What do you think?*

A: **Opisujući 'describing'** ... *what do you think about opisujući?*

L: *I'm not sure about that word, ... da opiše 'to describe), ili 'or' ...te koja opisuje 'and which describes'.*

b. J: **Da bi 'to'.**



- A: *Opisala* ‘describe’.
E: *Kako bi se opisali* ‘in order to describe’.
J: *Opisujući* ‘describing’

These two examples (4 a–b) show the complexity of the target language (TL) options for the realization of the *to*-infinitive clause. In this example the subjects used various types of dependent clauses such as participle clauses, relative clauses (both active and passive), adverbial clauses, etc. opting for the participle clause *opisujući* ‘describing’.

- (5) ST segment: *Trade, principally by water, connected them.*

M: *Ono što ih je povezivalo* ‘what connected them’ ... *bilo je uglavnom trgovina* ‘was mainly trade’ ... *aaaaa* ... *putem vode* ‘by water’.

L: *Principally, but I think that this trade could be the subject and that this principally by water is some kind of apposition and then connect it.*

A: *So you think we should start with trgovina* ‘trade’.

M: *Aha* ‘yes’.

L: *Trgovina* ‘trade’ ... *principally.*

A: *Trgovina, uglavnom putem vode* ‘trade, mainly by water’.

A: *Povezivala ih je trgovina, uglavnom putem vode.* ‘They were connected by trade, mainly by water’.

M: *No, it sounds better like this.*

L: *Trgovina, uglavnom putem vode ih je povezivala.* ‘Trade, mainly by water connected them’.

A: *So, to start with the word povezivala ih je trgovina* ‘they were connected by trade’ ... *uglavnom putem vode* ‘mainly by water’.

L: *This sounds a bit funny.*

Example (5) shows the problems related to the word order of sentence elements, whereby the subjects express uncertainty regarding the position of the word “trade.”

4.1.2. Examples from L2 translation (translation into English)

- (6) ST segment: *U Tuzli je pronađeno* ‘was found’ *najstarije sojeničko naselje u Evropi* ...
S: *Was found in Tuzla.*
A: *Was found in Tuzla.*
S: *Has been or was?*
A: *Was.*



S: *Was discovered.*

In example (6) the subjects encounter the problem related to the choice of the proper tense. They discuss the usage of Past Simple or Present Perfect (passive).

(7) ST segment: ... *za razliku od ostalih sojeničkih naselja pronađenih u Evropi, koja datiraju iz **gvozdenog doba** 'unlike other lake-dwelling communities found in Europe, which date back to **the Iron Age**'*

a. L: **Iron Age.**

A: **Iron Age**, do we need article?

L: No, we just need a capital letter.

b. A: Date back to **the Iron Age.**

S: **The Iron Age?**

M: **Iron Age.**

A: So ... **the Iron Age.**

Examples (7a-b) show the most numerous syntactic problems in L2 translation, namely those related to the usage of articles. The subjects in example (7a) discuss the usage of article and immediately reject it, while the subjects in example (7b) discuss the options with and without the definite article, finally deciding to use the latter.

The following figure shows group results for the category of syntactic problems in both directions of translation:

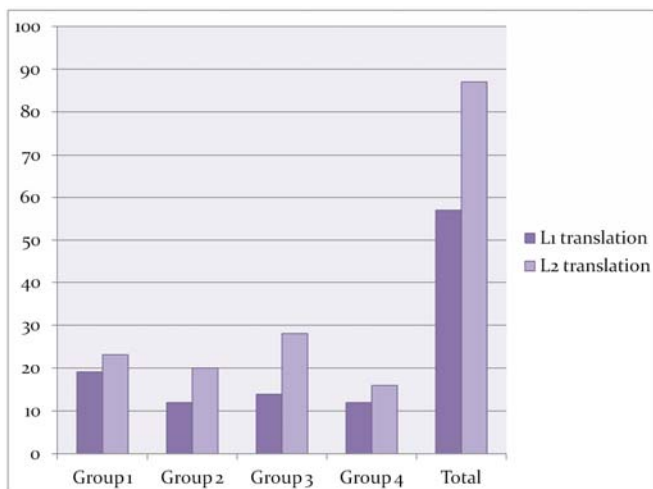


Figure 1. Syntactic problems – group results.



It is evident that Group 1 identified the largest number of problems in L1 translation - 19, followed by Group 3 with 14 problems. Groups 2 and 4 both registered 12 problems in L1 translation. In L2 translation Group 3 encountered 28 problems. The subjects in Group 1 had 23 problems while those in Group 2 identified 20 problems. Group 4 had the lowest number of problems – 16.

As the category of syntactic problems is rather diversified, the syntactic problems identified were further divided. Figure 2 brings a detailed division of syntactic problems.

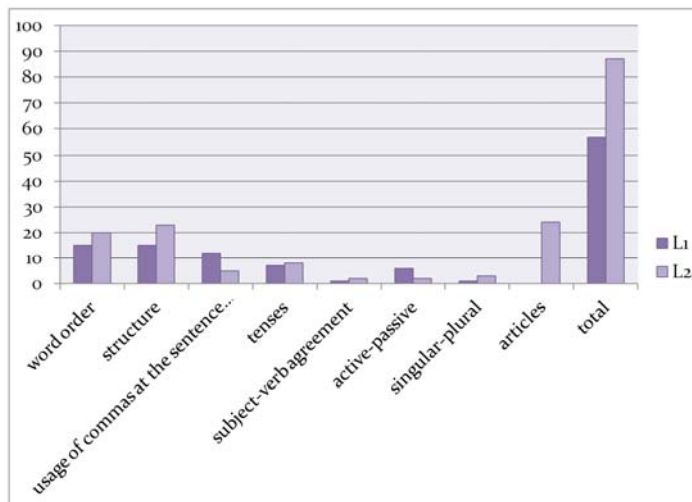


Figure 2. Syntactic problems – detailed analysis.

The number of these problems is evidently different in the two directions of translation (57 in L1 compared to 87 in L2 translation). Word order was present more in L2 (20 problems) than in L1 (15). The problems related to structure were more frequently encountered in L2 (23 cases) than in L1 translation (15 cases). Structure here refers to various elements within a sentence. For example, it includes the choice of pre- or post-modification in the noun phrase or types of dependent clauses used (relative, appositive, *-ed* or *-ing* participle, etc). The subjects encountered problems with the usage of commas at the sentence level more in L1 than in L2. Tenses, subject-verb agreement, and the usage of singular or plural forms are somewhat similar for both languages, while the choice between active or passive sentence structures was registered more often in L1 than in L2. Finally, as many as 24 syntactic problems in L2 translation are related to the usage of articles.



4.2. Individual and Collaborative Translation

Although it can be easily concluded that both collaborative and individual translation contain some common elements, these two translation processes certainly exhibit differences in certain aspects. The data from the questionnaires and the data from the evaluation of the target texts were obtained in completely the same manner, which enabled direct comparison. On the other hand, the data from the collaborative protocols and the IPDRs are rather different from each other, which makes direct comparison impossible. We can only compare the problems registered in the translation protocols and those which the subjects mentioned in their IPDRs, as well as the solutions.

In terms of the problems that appeared in individual translations, one must bear in mind that since the individual translations were not recorded or monitored, all the information related to the problems were gathered from the subjects' IPDRs. The following figure presents the problems identified in individual translation tasks.

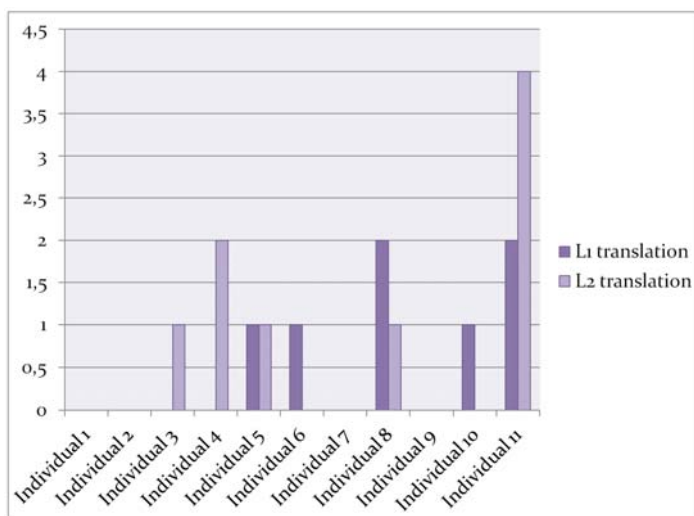


Figure 3. Individual translations.

As can be seen in Figure 3, only seven individual subjects reported that they had identified syntactic problems during their translation tasks. However, not all of them had problems in both directions of translation. Individuals 3 and 4 identified syntactic problems in L2 translation only, while individuals 6 and 10 identified those problems in L1 translation. Only individuals 5, 8, and 11 identified syntactic problems in both directions of translation.



Bearing in mind the type and reliability of the data obtained from the subjects who translated the tasks individually, the analysis of solutions was rather limited. The qualitative assessment of translation was therefore immensely important. It was done by means of external evaluation and is given in the following figure:

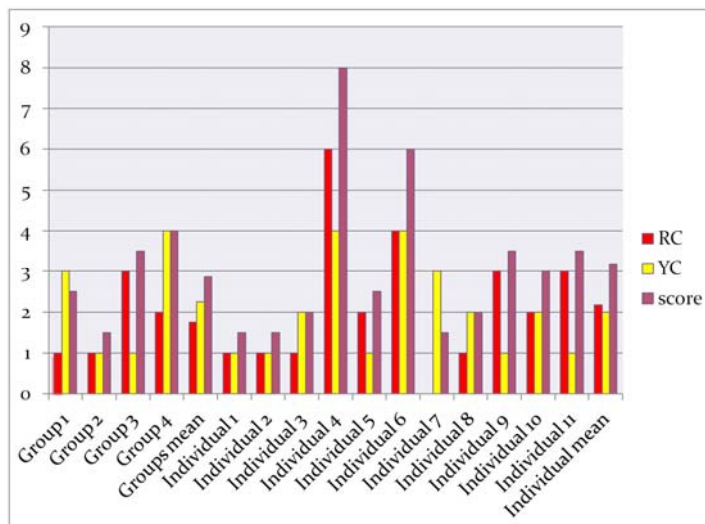


Figure 4. Revisable elements from main and control research studies.

When we compare the figures, in L1 translation the subjects who participated in collaborative translation got a lower number of red but a higher number of yellow cards than the subjects who translated individually. As a result, their revisability score (groups mean value 2.87) is slightly lower (meaning better) than for the individuals (individual mean value 3.18). The situation is completely the same for L2 translation where the revisability score for collaborative translation is 6.37 and for individual translation 6.90.

5. Conclusion

The comparative analysis of problems encountered in both collaborative and individual translation tasks clearly showed that these two methods differ in the number of problems encountered. Novice translators working on general texts in groups tend to encounter more problems than their colleagues working on the same texts individually. Collaborative translation processes reveal a significantly higher number of problems (87 in L2 and 57 in L2 translation) as well as their diversification into more categories. The situation in individual translation tasks is characterized



by a very small number of problems identified (7 in L1 translation and 9 in L2 translation).

The quality of the final products of translation of general texts depends on both direction of translation and its type (collaborative vs. individual). Namely, the quality of L1 translation proved to be higher than the quality of L2 translation. The same can be stated for collaborative and individual work. The quality of the products which were the results of collaborative translation was somewhat higher when compared to individual translation.

The change of some variables (such as text type, the subjects' translation experience, and the number of subjects) may offer the possibility for the generalization of certain conclusions. It should be stated that more research into this subject matter would certainly create possibilities for additional conclusions and generalizations. We hope that the study may provide some guidelines for further research into directionality, collaborative translation, and translation processes.

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ULOGA PROTOKOLA SKUPNOG PREVOĐENJA (CTP) U ZNANOSTI O PREVOĐENJU

Postoje dva općeprihvaćena pristupa u istraživanju prevođenja, od kojih je jedan orijentiran na produkt, a drugi na proces (Kusssmaul 1995: 9). Dok se prvi pristup prvenstveno bavi rezultatima prevođenja, drugi pruža uvid u kognitivni aspekt samoga procesa. Iako postoje mnoge studije raznih oblika procesno orijentiranih zadataka, malo ih se bavi proučavanjem metode poznate kao „protokoli skupnog prevođenja” (CTP), koja omogućuje analiziranje mnogih lingvističkih aspekata prijevodnoga procesa. U radu se predstavljaju uporaba i praktični učinci CTP-a u analizi sintaktičkih aspekata prijevodnoga procesa. Također se ispituju elementi direkcionalnosti u dvojezičnom procesiranju te iznosi usporedba skupnih i pojedinačnih prijevodnih zadataka u kojima su subjekti bili prevoditelji bez profesionalnog iskustva.

Ključne riječi: znanost o prevođenju; protokoli skupnog prevođenja; sintaktički problemi; direkcionalnost; dvojezično procesiranje; L1 prijevod; L2 prijevod.