

Revisions in Literary Translation

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Abstract

Published literary translation is the result of the effort of multiple people.¹ Of those, the two participants with the biggest impact on the finished translation are the translator and the editor, the contributions of whom are often overlooked. In this paper a methodology for conducting quantitative analysis of editorial revisions in any given text, including their categorization, is proposed. The purpose is to shed light on the types and the scope of editorial revisions in literary translations. Subsequently, the methodology is applied to analyse a revision of the Slovak translation of the *Tomi Adeyemi* novel *Children of Blood and Bone* with the aim to test the viability of the methodology.

Introduction

A published translation of a literary work will typically pass through the hands of multiple people (cf. Halová 2020). Chief among them stands the translator, on whose work, i.e. the translation, translation studies have tended to focus. After all, there is no translation without a translator. However, there is another whose contributions can – and often have – major impact on the quality of the finished product and whose work is often overlooked – the translation's editor. In literary translation circles, the opinion that an editor is an inseparable part of the literary translation process can often be encountered. However, translation studies academia, at least in Slovakia, rarely goes beyond such claims and actually researches the editor's work. And much of the research that has been published (e.g. Ferenčík 1982; Mossop 2014) tends to focus on the processes of editing or revising in more general terms, functions of an editor, or to a lesser extent the editor as a person (e.g. their background) rather than on examining specific editorial/revisional modifications and their classification. The exception to this would be various TQA models used in evaluating commercial translations by different translation agencies. This paper aims to enrich the existing body of research on the editor's work and to propose a methodology for conducting analysis of editorial modifications in any given text and their categorization based on typographic, linguistic and translation rules, linguistic and translation norms (cf. Toury 1995) and strategies. Our purpose is to shed light on the types and the scope of editorial modifications in literary translations. However, it is important to note the research is still

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in its very early stages, and as such, the suggested methodology and typology do not claim to be definitive, nor do the preliminary results claim to be generalisable. In a later part of the paper, the use of the methodology and the classification shall be demonstrated by applying them to the Slovak translation of the Tomi Adeyemi young-adult novel *Children of Blood and Bone* (2018) translated by Linda Magáthová in 2019.

1 Review of the related literature

As has been mentioned previously, not many Slovak translation studies publications explore the details of translation editors' work with a translation. The main body of work in Slovak research has been produced for example by Ján Ferenčík (1982), to a lesser extent (at least in this case) Anton Popovič (1975, 1983), or Juraj Šebesta (2008) – who explores the need for editors in regards to non-literary book translation – and Lucia Paulínyová (2017) who explores editors of audio-visual translations, specifically in regards to dubbing. **Popovič** sees the editor as “an exponent of the publishing literary institution, or of cultural policy” (Popovič 1983, 170) who provides approval of the text from various standpoints – cultural policy, literary situation, literary and language norms, requirements of the publishing institution (Popovič 1975).

Ferenčík (1982) provides a substantially more complex view of the discussed issue. He sees the editor as the most important part of the editorial section and as an “initiator, organizer, expert and literary judge and reviser of a text designated for publication regardless of its variety, character, time and regional provenance” (Ferenčík 1982, 91) and also as a “creative and organizational worker in the field of book production, who provides in a complex manner text approbation and a variety of other activities necessary for publishing of a text prepared by an author” (ibid., 93). He also does not necessarily perceive editors as one homogenous group, but rather divides them into several categories depending on their specialisation. The two main divisions are into working with literary or non-literary literature and original or translational literature (ibid., 94). Ferenčík then goes on to say that such division is still insufficient, and that each editor must further specialise on specific scientific fields, literary genres etc.

Ferenčík (1982) then discusses various aspects of the editing profession with particular focus on editors of literary translations, be it what he considers a required educational background, individual steps of the editing process (from obtaining first information about a work of literature to promoting the translation) and several others. Most, however, are not important in the context of this paper, with a sole exception being the descriptions of individual functions fulfilled by the editor. Ferenčík (1982, 100-101) defines six of them, with points b), c), and d) being the most important to us:

- a) *publishing editor* – can be seen as a managerial role, within this function the editor suggests a literary work for translation and publication, chooses a translator and other members of the editing process, organizes their work etc.;

- b) *text approbation* – comparing of the original and translated text (in entirety or only selected parts) to check whether the form and content of the translation are adequate, approval of approach to the text or helping with its creation;
- c) *linguistic reviser* – revising spelling and overall grammar of the translation in accordance with current linguistic norms and the chosen approach;
- d) *proofreader* – supervision of all proofreading/revisional procedures not carried out by the editor themselves etc.;
- e) *responsible editor of the publication* – supervision of all editorial processes not carried out by the editor themselves, instructing and providing materials to other participants of the editorial process, determines the rate at which the translator will be paid etc.;
- f) *promoter of the literary work* – participation in promoting of the literary work.

Evidently, there is an overlap between Ferenčík's and Popovič's understanding of the editor. However, they do differ in one regard, and that is the terminology they use. In Slovak, Ferenčík and a handful of other scholars use the term *editor*, whereas Popovič and most others use *redaktor*. Since, in Slovak literature on the topic as whole, the two terms seem to denote the same person, this difference tends to, so-to-speak, muddy the waters a bit. Unfortunately, as this paper will show, Anglophone literature does not seem to escape the problem of slightly confusing terminology either.

Brian Mossop (2014) provides another fairly complex look at editing. He distinguishes two distinct roles that manipulate a translated text after the fact of translation – an editor and a reviser.² In general terms, Mossop (2014, 18) defines both roles as follows:

"The editor or reviser is a gatekeeper, who corrects the text so that it conforms to society's linguistic and textual rules and achieves the publisher's goals. The editor or reviser is also a language therapist who improves the text to ensure ease of mental processing and suitability of the text for its future users."

At its core, this general definition does not conflict with either Popovič or Ferenčík. This story, however, changes once Mossop (2014) gets into the details of each role. According to him, "editing means reading a text which is not a translation in order to spot problematic passages and making any needed corrections or improvements" (Mossop 2014, 29) and if the text happens to be a translation, the editors are either not aware of the fact, or even if they are, they approach the translation as an original

² It is important to note that unlike Ferenčík (1982) and Popovič (1975, 1983), Mossop (2014) does not focus exclusively on literary translations, but also the non-literary kind.

text. It is by this virtue that Mossop's conception of an editor conflicts with Ferencík's as shown above and, frankly, Slovak conceptions in general.

Mossop (2014, 115) defines revising in a quite similar manner: "Revising is that function of professional translators in which they find features of the draft translation that fall short of what is acceptable, as determined by some concept of quality, [...], and make any needed corrections and improvements." This again conflicts with Slovak scholars, who have no expectation of editors/revisers also being translators. As such, neither of Mossop's roles quite correspond with Slovak understanding of an editor, which somewhat complicates international terminology.

Mossop also states that "[t]here is no generally recognized English terminology for revision activities. Terms such as revise, re-read, check, cross-read, proofread, review and quality-control are each used in a variety of meanings..." (Mossop 2014, 116). As such, the term **editor** will be used in the remainder of the paper to denote specifically a participant of the communication process who provides linguistic, text and social approbation of a literary book translation, and who simultaneously is neither the translator nor the target reader of the text.

2 The methodology and the typology

The overall aim of the research, in which this paper is the first step, is to conduct a purely quantitative analysis of editorial modifications in literary translations. As such, there will not be any qualitative judgements made. Much like the rest of the research, the methodology proposed below is in its early stages and is likely to develop further. One of the expected developments would be modifying it based on recognised random sampling methodologies. As such, further discussion on methodology in this paper describes merely the processes applied in the preliminary analysis of a Slovak translation that is itself discussed in the final part of the paper and that was used to provide a basis for the proposed typology discussed in this section of the paper. Only a portion of the translation was to be analysed, specifically about 15-20 %, depending on its overall length and preferably its natural breaking points such as chapters (e.g. finishing analysis of an entire chapter where applicable rather than abruptly stopping in the middle of it for the sake of keeping to exact percentages). It was decided by the paper's author to split the analysed portion into two randomly selected parts – one from the first half of the text, the other from the second half. While this is not necessarily based on any recognised methodology on random sampling, the author's reasoning for splitting the analysed portions into two separate sections is that different kinds of revisions may potentially arise depending on the content of the text/in different portions of the text. It is thus the author's hope that the splitting will lead to a higher variety in revisions encountered when compared to analysing a single continuous portion of the text.

As for the typology itself, it would be ideal to base it on one that already exists and only modify it as necessary at most. Unfortunately, things are not that simple and models with any degree of relevancy are few

and far between. Robin (2018) focuses directly on what she calls revisional modifications, but from a different, less linguistic viewpoint. She outlines four categories of possible modifications (Robin 2018, 159):

Modification	Basis of intervention	of Prescriptive force	Attribute	Effect	
Rule-based	equivalence, linguistic rules, translation brief		compulsory	required correction	positive
Norm-based	translation and linguistic norms		optional	recommended correction	positive
Strategy-based	communication principles and text-building strategies		optional	improvement	positive
Preference-based	individual preferences		unnecessary	pointless intervention	no effect/negative

Table 1: Robin (2018) – The typology of revisional modifications

This typology is based on a different a point of view than this paper calls for and as such is not quite suitable for our purposes.

It follows reason that editorial modifications would be closely related to types of mistakes made in translations by translators, and those are classified by quite a few models, specifically translation quality assessment models or TQA models for short used in evaluating quality of commercial translations by various translation agencies. In 2012 Sharon O’Brien conducted a research in which she compared eleven such models, ten evaluating translations from the viewpoint of errors and one “from the point of view of service provision and the competences, tools and procedures required to produce high quality translation” (O’Brien 2012, 57). The following table was adapted from her research by Martínez (2014, 83):

Errors present in TQA models	Macro-error type	Includes the following micro-error types
10/11	Language	9/10 including grammar 7/10 including syntax 7/10 including spelling 6/10 including punctuation
10/11	Terminology	General consensus on definition: 1) Adherence to client glossary 2) Adherence to industry terminology 3) Consistency
9/11	Accuracy	7/10 including omissions

		7/10 including additions 7/10 including inaccurate cross-references 7/10 including meaning
7/11	Style	4/7 including lack of adherence to 'client style guide'

Table 2: Macro-and micro-error types (adapted from O'Brien 2012, 60)

These findings are quite useful, but they still have certain shortcomings. The most glaring one is that all of the examined TQA models focus on non-literary translations, which renders multiple micro-error types practically useless in the context of this paper (e.g. adherence to client glossary, adherence to 'client style guide'³ etc.). Next, this paper does not necessarily focus on errors. After all, any given translator's solution may be perfectly acceptable, but an editor might suggest alternate/improved solution all the same. Also, the micro-error types categorized under language may be sufficient for English translations, but for Slovak (and other Slavic languages and, presumably, inflected languages in general) they can be exceptionally broad (e.g. grammar) or not that much of a problem (e.g. spelling outside of typos). Lastly, the preliminary results of this paper seem to suggest editors often work within the style macro-category (although such claim needs to be verified with further research), yet the examined TQA models seem to completely lack any useful micro-errors of this type. To conclude, the shown table can serve as a useful inspiration and perhaps even a loose base, but ultimately it has too many shortcomings for our purposes.

The proposed model consists of four macro-categories of editorial modifications mostly unchanged from O'Brien's findings and further divided into multiple micro-categories. The individual categories were devised mainly on the basis of an analysis of editorial revisions in Slovak translation of the Tomi Adeyemi novel *Children of Blood and Bone* and personal experience of the paper's author with literary translation.

Macro-category	Micro-categories
Language and presentation	Punctuation, capitalisation, prepositions, conjunctions, spelling (e.g. typos), lexeme/phrase omissions, lexeme/phrase additions, unjustified substandard language (e.g. improper use of a dialect), grammatical qualities (e.g. singular vs. plural, grammatical case),

³Although publishing houses can have certain in-house style customs/preferences.

	formatting and graphical presentation (e.g. double spaces, merged paragraphs)
Accuracy	Mistranslation, content omissions, content additions, intertextual references (e.g. allusions)
Terminology	Terms, realia, irrealia, consistency
Style	Restyling, lexical repetitions, rephrasing with standardised elements (e.g. idioms), redundant lexemes/phrases, missing lexemes/phrases, syntax

Table 3: Editorial revisions typology

The **language and presentation** macro-category groups together revisions of purely linguistic nature and of formatting and text presentation nature, such as corrections of incorrect prepositions, conjunctions, or spelling. The lexeme/phrase omission and addition corrections in this category are not necessitated by translator's stylistic decisions or misunderstanding of source content, but by inadvertently omitting a word or phrase (e.g. by accidentally deleting it in translator's own revisions or simply forgetting to type it out) or unintentionally repeating a word (for similar reasons as with omissions). The following examples come from the translation⁴ analysed in more detail in a later section of this paper.

Omission example

Incorrect: "*Kráčam za ňou a s každým krokom sa musím čoraz namáhať...*"

Correct: "*Kráčam za ňou a s každým krokom sa musím čoraz **viac** namáhať...*"

Addition example

Incorrect: "...*Ale keď sa **ma** pokúša odvieť **ma** preč...*"

Correct: "*Ale keď sa **ma** pokúša odvieť preč...*"

In the omission example addition of the word *viac* [more] is necessary for the statement to make sense, but from its surroundings it is clear omitting it did not arise from a misunderstanding or a stylistic choice. Similarly, in the addition example doubling of the pronoun *ma* [me] is clearly not intentional and has nothing to (directly) do with style or understanding. Instead, it is quite likely the translator simply rephrased the sentence at some point and overlooked the second pronoun.

The **accuracy** macro-category focuses on content relevant revisions. Thus, the omission and addition corrections here stem from the translator intentionally or inadvertently not translating something (e.g. a sentence)

⁴ Adeyemi, T. 2018. *Children of Blood and Bone*. Translated by: Linda Magáthová. New York: Macmillan. ISBN 978-1250170972.

or, alternatively, writing in content not present in the source text (e.g. again a sentence). Intertextual references do not include only allusions and other references to other generally unrelated works of art, but also references, callbacks etc. between individual parts of book series, e.g. a trilogy.

The **terminology** macro-category is concerned with issues of proper use of any terms that may be found in a given literary text, realia, irrealia and consistency of the aforementioned elements. Popovič (1983, 194) defines realia as “elements of cultural code realised in the theme of the original.” In other words, realia are elements (e.g. words or phrases) describing an item, tradition, food etc. specific to a particular culture. For instance, a kilt and haggis would constitute Scottish realia. Irrealia on the other hand are defined by Loponen (2009, 170) as “the cultural anchors of the fictional culture, creating implicit and explicit references that can define the fictional culture on multiple simultaneous levels...” Simply put, irrealia are a counterpart to realia – they serve the same purpose, but for a fictional culture rather than a real one. As Loponen says (ibid.), they also present us “with translation problems similar to realia – with all new translation challenges presented by the factual non-existence of the referred cultures, time periods and/or geographic locations.”

Lastly the **style** macro-category includes editor’s operations on the stylistic level of a translation. Operations in this category include restyling or rewording and rephrasing with an idiomatic expression where appropriate. Lexical repetitions refer to the editor minimising lexical repetitions through use of synonymy, pronouns etc. This is pertinent particularly for languages such as Slovak, that frown upon unmotivated repetition in literary text, preferring instead the use of language’s extensive synonymy. As for missing or redundant elements, it refers to lexemes and phrases, presence, or absence of which are grammatically correct, but that need to be removed/added due to stylistic norms. A prime example of lexemes that frequently need be added/removed (or even corrected to an appropriate form, but that would fall within the language and presentation macro-category) in Slovak are the possessive pronouns *svoj/svoje* and *jeho/jej/ich*⁵.

To conclude this part of the paper it is important to mention that this research is in a rather early stage. Thus, the presented typology itself is not in its final form, but rather in a state of flux. In future iterations, aspects of it – presumably mainly the included micro-categories – are likely to change, be it through merging, dividing or introducing new aspects. And, most importantly, before the typology can be considered complete, each macro- and micro-category alike must be properly defined to ensure ease of use and standardised classification of revisions when analysing any text for one, and for two, to improve expandability of the typology. In other words,

⁵ *Svoj/svoje* are the singular and plural forms respectively of a first person possessive pronoun. *Jeho/jej/ich* are the masculine singular, feminine singular, and plural forms respectively of the equivalent third person pronoun. The third person variations are often used incorrectly where first person ought to be used and vice versa.

proper definitions should also make it clear when a particular revision does not fall under any defined micro-category and therefore when it is necessary to introduce a new micro-category, and to easily assign it to the appropriate macro-category.

3 Preliminary results

The presented typology is in part based on an analysis of Linda Magátová's 2019 Slovak translation of the novel *Children of Blood and Bone* by Tomi Adeyemi. Approximately 40 MS Word pages (or 63.28777 standardised pages⁶ out of 414.59666) of it were analysed in accordance with methodology shown in a previous section of the paper. Specifically pages 63-82 and 170-189 in the provided Word document were selected.

Both beginning pages (63 and 170) were selected using a random number generator with number ranges for the generation being defined based on the two halves of the text. Considering the provided MS Word document has 251 pages, the starting point for both ranges was 1-125 and 126-251. Subsequently 19 pages, or 7.5% of all pages were subtracted from the upper limit of both ranges to ensure first half analysis would not run over to the second part and that the second part analysis would be left with enough text to analyse regardless of the number generated. The final ranges were then 1-106 and 126-232.

The ending pages (82 and 189) were then calculated in order for both parts to constitute approximately 7.5 % (half of the total analysed) of the length of the translation (neither ending page provided a natural breaking point in the text and the pages were thus analysed in their entirety).

The analysis consisted of going over the selected portions of the text and noting down the individual revisions made by the translation's editor and later categorizing them using to typology to test its viability. In this section, results of the analysis will be discussed.

In the author's experience, when discussing literary translations, it is safe to assume the majority of revisions will fall under the language and presentation macro-category and the style macro-category. When it comes to competent translators, content of their translations will not need to be modified by an editor all that often, although small misunderstandings or mistakes do happen, so the accuracy macro-category should be represented, but less than the two already mentioned. As for terminology revisions, they can be considered the least likely in most literary works, as these often do not contain that many terms, realia or irrealia. Naturally, individual exceptions or even entire genres (such as travel novels) where that may be less true exist. With these assumptions in mind, let us take a look at the results of the analysis in Table 4 below.

As is evident from the table, the aforementioned assumptions seem to hold for the analysed translation – the editor worked predominantly at the language and style levels. The most frequent micro-categories

⁶ One standardised page equals 1800 characters including spaces.

within *Language and presentation* are punctuation, capitalisation, grammatical qualities, spelling, and formatting and graphical presentation. Punctuation consisted mostly of correcting missing or incorrect commas, which – considering complexity of Slovak rules for writing commas – is not surprising. Spelling, and formatting and graphical presentation are not surprising either – they consist mainly of regular typos and use of spaces (double spaces, spaces after ellipsis etc.) respectively. Errors in grammatical qualities were represented mainly by use of incorrect grammatical cases (presumably arising from rephrasing solutions and missing a word that needs to be in a different case), e.g. using of the genitive case “*Divínok, ktorých bez prestania...*” instead of the correct accusative case “*Divínok, ktoré bez prestania...*”, and incorrect perfective aspect of verbs, e.g. using perfective aspect “*Urobili všetko...*” instead of imperfective “*Robili všetko...*” Lastly, the inclusion of capitalisation among the most frequent modifications is perhaps a little misleading. While it was corrected 35 times in the analysed portion of the translation alone, 24 of those corrections were identical – the translator consistently translated one word (*Sky Mother* → *Nebeská matka* instead of *Nebeská Matka*) without capitalising it.

All revisions: 440	Language and presentation: 205	Capitalisation: 35
		Conjunctions: 17
		Formatting and graphical presentation: 25
		Grammatical qualities: 30
		Lexeme/phrase additions: 5
		Lexeme/phrase omissions: 6
		Prepositions: 13
		Punctuation: 39
		Spelling: 27
		Unjustified substandard language: 8
	Style: 199	Lexical repetitions: 2
		Missing lexemes/phrases: 5
		Redundant lexemes/phrases: 44
		Rephrasing with standardised elements: 2
		Restyling: 131
		Syntax: 15
	Accuracy: 32	Content additions: 2
		Content omissions: 5

		Mistranslation: 25
	Terminology: 4	Consistency: 3
		Terms: 1

Table 4: Analysis results

The style macro-category consisted mainly of restyling and in the far second removal of redundant lexemes/phrases. Restyling lay predominantly in simply choosing a better fitting synonym or rephrasing to sound more natural.

Restyling example 1

Translator: *Nevie, ako má **kontrolovať** svoje...*

Editor: *Nevie, ako má **ovládať** svoje...*

Restyling example 2

Translator: *Máš to tak s každým?*

Editor: *Stáva sa ti to pri všetkých?*

Removal of redundant lexemes/phrases was consistent with the already discussed description of this micro-category – the editor mostly removed unnecessary possessive pronouns (*svoj/jeho*) and also demonstrative pronouns.

The mistranslations within the accuracy macro-category were fairly minor, without much impact on the text as a whole, for example the following sentence: “*I swear I can feel this new white **streak growing**,*” references a white streak of hair of one of the characters. The translator, however, translates it as “*Prisahal by som, že tento môj nový, biely **prameň sily mocnie**.*” *Prameň sily mocnie* would more accurately correspond to *source of power grows*, or in the grammatical context *source of power is growing*. The editor accurately corrects the Slovak translation to reference hair. Coincidentally, in the example sentence the editor also removed *tento* as an unneeded demonstrative pronoun, and the comma after *nový* as superfluous and incorrect.

The macro-category of terminology was almost non-existent in the analysed segments, and the few existing revisions were rather minor, for example, the translator generally translated *firehawk* as *ohňosokol*, but in one case chose the translation *ohňojastrab*, which references a different species of birds of prey (namely falcon). The editor revises this translation to be consistent with the rest.

Conclusion

As demonstrated at the beginning of the article, several Slovak scholars have written about editors. Anton Popovič (1975, 1983) and Ján Ferenčík (1982), while using different terminology, both describe the work

of such an editor. Of the two scholars, Ferencík goes into a lot more detail, defining the editor as an “initiator, organizer, expert and literary judge and reviser of a text designated for publication regardless of its variety, character, time and regional provenance” (Ferencík 1982, 91) and also as a “creative and organizational worker in the field of book production, who provides in a complex manner text approbation and a variety of other activities necessary for publishing of a text prepared by an author” (ibid., 93). On the other hand, Juraj Šebesta (2008) explains the need for editors when it comes to non-literary book translations and Lucia Paulínyová (2017) explores the work of editors in audio-visual translation. Another scholar to discuss editors is Brian Mossop (2014) who discusses revising and editing in even more general terms. He outlines roles of the editor and of the reviser, although he recognises terminology regarding editing and revising is not standardised. Either way, it can be concluded neither of the roles as defined by Mossop (2014) quite corresponds with Slovak understanding of the editor’s role.

Looking at literature more closely related to this paper’s goal, i.e. proposing a typology for categorizing editorial modifications in literary translations, one can find a typology proposed by Edina Robin (2018) and Sharon O’Brien’s research of TQA models (2012). Neither, however, is quite suitable for the goal of this paper. The paper utilises a quantitative approach as opposed to Robin’s (2018) qualitative approach, which finds suitable applications in other contexts. The synthesised results of O’Brien’s (2012) research, on the other hand, represent a useful resource, but due to the orientation of the individual TQA models on non-literary translations and seeming ideal application to translations to English, several of the categories presented in the results are insufficient when applied to literary translation into a inflected language such as Slovak. As such, a new typology inspired by O’Brien’s research is proposed. It consists of four macro-categories (Language and presentation, Accuracy, Terminology, and Style) further divided into various micro-categories. The typology is, however, in early stages and thus, especially on the level of micro-categories, subject to change. Moreover, individual categories are not yet fully or at all properly defined. Finalising the typology, including the definitions of each category, are among the chief goals of further research along with further developing a methodology to be used for analysing translation along with the typology.

Despite the typology not being entirely finished, a very early preliminary analysis of a single text – Slovak translation of the novel *Children of Blood and Bone* – using the proposed method was conducted as a proof of concept. The results at this time point towards confirming the hypothesis that the majority of editorial revisions will fall under the formal and language macro-category, and the style macro-category with 205 revisions of the total 440 falling under the former and 199 under the latter. Nevertheless, more research needs be done before the results can be generalised.

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