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**CHANGES IN NARRATIVE SPEED AND RHYTHM IN TÕNU
ÕNNEPALU'S *PIIRIRIIK* AND ITS TRANSLATION *BORDER STATE***

BA thesis

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Abstract

Considerably more research has been done on the books translated from foreign languages into Estonian than on the translation of Estonian books into foreign languages. However, literature translations are an important part of how Estonia presents itself to the rest of the world. Based on the English translation of Tõnu Õnnepalu's *Piiririik*, the aim of this thesis is to analyse how the changes in punctuation have affected the narrative speed and rhythm of the novel.

The first part of the thesis provides an overview of Tõnu Õnnepalu as a writer, his other novels and his writing style. A general overview of Madli Puhvel as a translator will be given as well. The second part of the thesis will describe the methodology and process of analysis of *Piiririik* and its translation *Border State*. This part of the thesis also contains the comparative analysis of the novel and its translation.

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Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to see how the changes in the punctuation between *Piiririk* by Tõnu Õnnepalu and its English translation *Border State* have affected the narrative speed and rhythm of the novel. This thesis uses the Estonian edition *Piiririk* published in 1993 [2015] and the English edition *Border State* translated by Madli Puhvel and published by Northwestern University Press in 2000. The first part of the thesis provides a general overview of the novel *Piiririk/Border State* by Tõnu Õnnepalu, describes Õnnepalu's writing style and introduces Madli Puhvel as a translator. The second part of the thesis aims to focus on the comparison of the relevant passages from *Piiririk* by Tõnu Õnnepalu and its English translation *Border State* by Madli Puhvel. The aim of this thesis is not to evaluate the translation, but to compare the differences between the original and the translation regarding narrative speed. Since there inevitably are some notable differences between the source text and the target text, it is important to compare the texts to understand how different languages, literatures and cultures work in translation.

Around 30 books are translated from Estonian into foreign languages every year (see Soosaar 2018 para. 1). However, there has been little research into translations of Estonian fiction into different languages, although Estonian literature translations are an important part of how Estonian culture presents itself to the rest of the world. Considerably more research has been done on the translations of foreign literature into Estonian. The most translated Estonian writer is Jaan Kross (ELC, n. d. para. 1), but Andrus Kivirähk, A. H. Tammsaare and Tõnu Õnnepalu shortly follow.

One of the most translated contemporary Estonian authors is Tõnu Õnnepalu. He was born in 1962 in Tallinn and studied biology at the University of Tartu graduating in 1985. He has worked as a biology and chemistry teacher, later as a translator, a writer, and a journalist. Õnnepalu is also known by his pen names Emil Tode and Anton Nigov. (ELC, n. d. para. 1, 3)

Õnnepalu's breakthrough was his novel *Piiririik*, which he wrote under his pen name Emil Tode (ELC, n. d. para. 1). *Piiririik* was published in 1993 and received the annual literary award from the Baltic Assembly in 1994. The translation of *Piiririik* into English by Madli Puhvel is titled *Border State* (2000). *Border State* has achieved international success and it was the most translated Estonian book of the 1990s (ELC, n. d. para 1). The novel has been translated into Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Latvian, Russian, Dutch, German, Italian, French, Spanish, Hungarian, Turkish, and English shortly after its publication (Lehiste 2001: 68).

Piiririik/Border State is a tale of a young Francophile from Eastern Europe, who moves to Paris to work as a translator. He meets a wealthy Western European man Franz, with whom he develops a romantic relationship. The novel consists of letters, which are written by the main character to an American called Angelo. It is not clear whether Angelo is a real or an imaginary person. In letters, the main character describes the events that happened in France, recalls childhood, compares life in Western and Eastern Europe, and just fantasises about things that will never happen.

The gender of the narrator remains ambiguous in both the Estonian and English versions of the book. However, I have chosen the masculine pronoun to describe the narrator and his actions. One of the reasons behind that choice is the gender of the author. Since the novel is written from the first-person point of view, it can be assumed that the author's voice coincides with the narrator's to some extent. Another reason for that is on page 83 of the Estonian version, where the maid addresses the narrator as *monsieur*, which is a masculine title in French.

The style of the Estonian novel *Piiririik* can be characterised by long and poetic sentences and an atmosphere that resembles a fairy-tale. This impression is created by the novel's dream-like environment, where the activities and events are not taking place in a chronological order. It is noteworthy that the author has used the effect that the novel was

originally written in French and then translated into Estonian (Saar 2006: 148) which emphasises the almost magical aura of the novel. In both versions of the novel, the line between reality and imagination disappears almost completely which makes the reader question the truthfulness of the narrator's story.

Tõnu Õnnepalu's *Piiririk/Border State*, his other novels and writing style

According to Undusk (2009: para. 1) *Piiririk* has been called the first “Euronovel” of Estonia because of its postmodernist writing style, topic of homosexuality and its success on the international market. However, according to Undusk (2009: para. 1) the reason behind its popularity is not postmodernist writing style, but the descriptions of oppressively small and terrifyingly bleak Estonia. *Piiririk* was published shortly after the downfall of the Soviet Union, which is probably the reason why so many people from Estonia and other Eastern European countries were able to relate to the topics discussed in the novel. But there might be other reasons behind the popularity of Tõnu Õnnepalu's novels. Korp (2019: para. 1) claims that the reason why people love Õnnepalu's novels so much is that they need someone to tell them beautifully what it feels like to be a human. Õnnepalu is able to find beauty from the most ordinary everyday things and writes beautifully about the existential struggles, which many people experience at some point during their lifetime. As Meriste (2018: para. 3) writes, people are not expecting a new story, characters, not even new thoughts from Õnnepalu. They just expect him to write about anything (Meriste 2018: para. 1). The secret behind the popularity of Õnnepalu's novels is not about the thrilling storyline or heroic main character. The reason why people keep reading his books over and over again hides in his writing style. Õnnepalu has an ability to describe quotidian activities as something magical or special. According to Laanes (2004: 91), Õnnepalu makes meaningless and repetitive activities of everyday existence, like using up the toothpaste's tube or filling the rubbish bin, meaningful, explaining them. His slow-paced writing style provides the reader an escape from modern fast-paced life. He notices small details, for example in nature or in other people, and is able to present them in an enticing and captivating way.

Eneken Laanes (2004: 85) argues that Estonian literature responds to the major trends of world literature years or even decades later. According to Laanes (2004: 85) even some

Estonian authors themselves doubt if Estonian literature has anything valuable to offer to the wider world. However, Estonian and world literature should not be compared on the basis of forms, categorizations and movements, but on the basis of their respective dominant topics and central questions (Laanes 2004: 85). This is probably another reason behind the international success of *Piiririk* by Tõnu Õnnepalu.

Meriste (2018: para. 5) writes in the review of *Valede kataloog. Inglise aed* (2017) that throughout the text, Õnnepalu declares distancing himself from the unpleasant time he witnesses. Such distancing from time as well as space can be seen in Õnnepalu's earlier work as well, including *Piiririk*. One of the ways distancing is expressed in *Piiririk* is through the effect that the letters have been translated from French into Estonian. The Estonian reader is thus placed on a position of a bystander (Saar 2006: 148). In general, the central idea of Õnnepalu's earlier writings is the alienation from the surrounding time, life, and other people (Meriste 2018: para. 5). Thus, one of the main objectives of Õnnepalu's writings is to provide the reader an escape from the cares of an everyday life by, on the one hand, zooming in to everyday objects and activities, and on the other hand, avoiding socio-cultural context.

The literary tension of Õnnepalu's writings is not maintained by the activity, but by the narrator or the main character playing with different personas in his or her mind, either sincerely or parodying (Meriste 2018: para. 7). Korp (2019: para. 4) claims that Õnnepalu's style is most clearly expressed in his distancing, discreet attitude: he does not take part in life but is instead observing others. Õnnepalu keeps his reader excited: he can suddenly turn from profound contemplation to very ordinary activities and vice versa. Õnnepalu has found a very smart balance: his readers do not just want to move around in the everyday sphere, they want someone to tell them something about life. Describing everyday activities brings the author closer to the reader. This way, the reader can identify with Õnnepalu better. (Korp 2019: para. 9)

Önnepalu's novels are so widely read not because of their plot, but because of Önnepalu's captivating writing style. He has an ability to make everyday activities seem like something special and timeless. His style is slow, contemplative and relaxing, which makes the readers forget about everyday worries and see simple beautiful things in their lives. Thus, it is interesting to see whether the universal character of Önnepalu's novels is well suited for translations.

The Translator of *Border State* Madli Puhvel

The translator of *Piiririik*, Sirje Madli Puhvel was born in 1939 in Tallinn. Her family was forced to flee to Sweden in 1944 when Sirje Madli was just five years old. They travelled from Sweden to England and then to Canada. Sirje Madli obtained higher education in California, where she has lived most of her adult life. (Kajalood 2018) Prior to retirement, she worked as a microbiologist in the University of California. She is married to Jaan Puhvel, an Estonian linguist. (ETBL 2013:758,760)

Although Sirje Madli Puhvel dedicated her career to microbiology and immunology, she is best known in Estonia for her book on Lydia Koidula titled *Symbol of Dawn. The Life and Times of the 19th-Century Estonian Poet Lydia Koidula*. Puhvel has said that she wrote this book for an English-speaking audience at first and it was translated into Estonian later. Like most Estonian refugee children, Madli Puhvel grew up in a family where Estonian language and culture were highly valued. In my opinion this might be the main reason behind her great interest in Lydia Koidula and Estonian literature in general. Sirje Madli Puhvel has translated multiple Estonian books into English. Her published translations are *Trap in Infinity* by Eeva Park and *Border State* by Tõnu Õnnepalu. Her unpublished book translations are *Seventh Spring of Peace* by Viivi Luik and *I loved a Russian* by Maimu Berg. (Kajalood 2018)

As Ilse Lehiste (2001: 68) mentions in the translation review of *Border State*, the English title of the book is open to multiple interpretations. The word “riik” in Estonian is explicit, meaning state as a country. In English, however, the word “state” could also mean mental or emotional state. In that sense it can be claimed that the English title is even more suitable than the Estonian. (Lehiste 2001: 68) Another aspect which has changed during the translation process is punctuation, which, in turn, has changed the rhythm of the novel. Sentences in the English version of *Piiririik/Border State* are noticeably shorter than in the

Estonian version. In the following chapters I will compare how the changes in punctuation have affected the narrative rhythm of the novel.

Methodology

Piiririk has a very unique and clearly recognizable literary style. Õnnepalu blends ordinary activities with profound contemplation and jumps between narrator's fantasies and real events happened to the narrator, as well as narrator's past and present. The contemplative atmosphere of the novel is emphasised by unusually long sentences and unique use of punctuation which creates a distinctive rhythm.

Rhythm can be created with stressed and unstressed syllables, sounds, breaks and pauses etc. In both Estonian and English versions of *Piiririk/Border State* by Tõnu Õnnepalu, one of the main ways for creating rhythm is the use of punctuation, especially the use of full stops and semicolons. The frequent use of semicolon is quite unusual in the contemporary Estonian language and this feature is one of the characteristics which makes Õnnepalu's *Piiririk* so unique and exceptional. In the Estonian language the semicolon is used to link two independent clauses, especially when a comma is used for other purposes in those clauses (EKI 2016). Semicolon is stronger than a comma but weaker than a full stop (EKI 2016). In the Estonian version of the novel the sentences as well as the space between the full stops are longer and thus the rhythm of the text is slower, giving the narration a contemplative tone. This effect is further emphasised by the lack of dialogue and the fact that the story is told by using flashbacks from different stages of the narrator's life instead of chronological order. In the translated version, however, the sentences and therefore the space between the full stops are shorter, which, according to my reading, speeds up the pace of the novel and thus also changes the tone of narration. Semicolon is almost completely absent in the translated version and it is replaced with either a comma or a full stop.

Rhythm exists everywhere around us - from nature to man-made inventions. The rhythm in nature refers to regular timing, recurrence and rotation of phases, like the changes of the seasons or the alteration of day and night (Harding (1976: 1). In spoken language, rhythm

is created by sound and stress patterns. Thornborrow and Wareing (1998: 11) state that stress patterns of spoken English are used to create rhythmical effects in poetry. Placement of the stresses and therefore the changes in rhythm could slightly alter the meaning of the text (Thornborrow et al 1998: 28). Although Thornborrow and Wareing keep in mind poetry in particular, the same thing can be claimed about language in general, especially literary language and the language of literary fiction. Since the stress patterns and rhythm shift during the process of translation, studying the shifts and changes of rhythm in translations is important to understand the implications such shifts and changes have on translations in general, but on the image translated literature creates of an author in particular.

Hume (2005: 105) writes that narrative speed and physical speed are not necessarily intertwined and sometimes the narrative may even slow down while describing fast-moving objects. She explains that one way to evaluate narrative speed is in Gérard Genette's numeric terms, which compares the number of pages to the time span covered in the novel. However, this approach does not always accurately represent the reader's experience of the text. Hume (2005: 106) brings *Gerald's Party* by Robert Coover as an example, which has an "uncomfortable and even upsetting speed" although it covers only about two and a half minutes' action per page. (Hume 2005: 106) Therefore it can be claimed that narrative speed is not necessarily connected with the time span of the novel. In *Piiririk* by Tõnu Õnnepalu, evaluating the time span of the novel is quite difficult. The novel is written in the form of letters, which cover the narrator's childhood, adolescence and adult years. However, the time frame of writing those letters is unclear. The speed of the narration is therefore created by the use of language and the overall reflective mood of the novel. Sudden flashbacks add a subtle sense of restlessness into the novel and keeps the reader interested, but the general mood remains calm. One of the methods how Õnnepalu has achieved this effect is by the use of punctuation. Longer sentences force the reader to slow down and focus more on what the

narrator has to say, while the use of shorter sentences would have allowed the reader to grasp the sentence quicker and move on at a faster pace.

The aim of this thesis is to compare the differences between the original version and the translated version of the novel *Piiririik/Border State* by Tõnu Õnnepalu from the point of changes in narrative speed and rhythm. The passages were chosen from the novel in the order of their appearance, from pages 7 to 10 in *Piiririik* and from pages 1 to 4 in *Border State*. I selected the examples where, in my opinion, the changes in the rhythm and the punctuation between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) were most notable and where those changes had the largest impact on the text. The research will focus on the changes in punctuation that affect the rhythm and the pace of the narrative, concentrating mostly on the full stops, although in the relevant segments I will mention other changes as well.

Analysis of *Piiririk/Border State*

One of the most notable differences between the ST and the TT of the *Border State* are the changes made in the punctuation, which changes the narrative speed of the novel. In the ST, the sentences are considerably longer, consisting of several clauses, which creates the impression that the narrator is smoothly sliding from one thought to another. It seems that the author has deliberately used this technique to develop the meditative narrative style of the novel. Tõnu Õnnepalu is using mostly compound sentences to create that effect. In the TT, the original sentences have been divided into smaller segments, which gives the impression that the narrator's thoughts are more defined and intentional. The translator, Madli Puhvel, is trying to maintain this feature of Õnnepalu's writing style, but this has not been the translation dominant, since she adds, for instance, a few simple sentences between the compound sentences and significantly shortens the original sentences. An example of that would be the beginning of the novel, a passage that actually sets the scene for the narration:

Ma olen istunud fotolaboris, pimedas, punases põrguvalguses, ja vaadanud üle ühe öla ühtesid käsi, mis nõidusid tumeda vee kohal, sest veelgi rohkem kui see õlg ja need käed, võlus mind hetk, kui kujutis piirjoni hakkas võtma... See oli muide nii ammu, möödunud sajandil, kadunud maal: vähemalt Daguerre'i avastus pidi seal siiski tundud olema, sest ilmutusvanni mäletan ma selgesti. (Õnnepalu 2015: 7)

I have waited in the hellish glow of a darkroom and watched over a shoulder as a special pair of hands performed witchcraft above the murky liquid. The point at which the picture first emerged, that brink of development, fascinated me even more than the shoulder and the hands... That, by the way, was so long ago, in another century, in a forgotten country. But they must have been familiar with Daguerre's discovery. I remember the developing tank quite clearly. (Õnnepalu 2000: 1)

While translating the text, the translator has tried to divide the sentences of the ST into smaller and more easily translatable as well as readable segments. However, this strategy also shifts the focus to the plot and activities rather than the quiet process of walking alongside the narrator. In the original sentence the thoughts flow naturally from one to another, creating an effect of timelessness that is semantically also spelled out in the passage: "...that, by the way,

was so long ago, in another century,... “. A similar change in the writing style is clearly visible in the following example:

Sest sa oled võõras, sest me ei pruugi enam kunagi kohtuda, sest sa oled tulnud teiselt poolt maakera ega tea midagi sellest, mida ma sulle jutustama hakkam: ma võin valetada, välja mõelda, nagu süda lustib! (Õnnepalu 2015: 7)

You are a stranger I may never again meet. You have come from the other side of the world and know nothing of what I am to tell you. I could lie, could fabricate whatever my heart desired! (Õnnepalu 2000: 1)

This example demonstrates how the changes in punctuation have changed the pace and the focus of the passage. Just like in the preceding example, the sentences in the ST are considerably longer than in the TT. The translational sentences have been divided into shorter segments, which makes the text easier to read and therefore speeds up the reading process. This in turn changes the way the readers comprehend the mood of the novel. The ST is more meditative and reflective and while the TT is all that, there is an added sense of urgency which the ST does not have. This strategy, however, shifts the focus in many of the sentences and, more importantly, transforms Õnnepalu's characteristic writing style.

Such changes play an important role in how the reader understands the narrator's thought process and his inner world, but also how the formal, text formation elements support the narrative. As Korp (2019: para. 4) mentions, Õnnepalu's style is expressed in a distancing attitude: his main characters are not taking part in life, but are observing other people and the surrounding world. In the translation the emphasis is shifted from the surrounding world to the 'I' character's thoughts and feelings. For example, in ST the narration concerning the stream of consciousness of the 'I' character is given in one long sentence reflecting the mindset as well as the thought process:

Ometi pole mul midagi muud teha kui sellele kirjale mõelda, kõndides läbi oma tühjade ja valgete päevade, näpu otsas portfell, kus kannan valguskoopiaid nende oma vanameeste luuletustest (see on mu "töö", küllap jõuan sellest veel rääkida) ja Madame de Sevigné kirjade taskuväljaannet; kõndides läbi Montsouris' pargi, kus õitsevad veel hilised topeltjasmiinid,

seisatades liibanoni seedri all, haistes vaigulõhna; sukeldudes metroo maa-alusesse riiki, kus kohtan tonte ja inimesi... (Õnnepalu 2015: 8)

The translational excerpt is as follows:

And yet I don't have much to do here except think about this letter. I walk through empty, blank days, briefcase in hand, carrying photocopies of the poems my old men have written (that's my "work"; I'll tell you about it later) and a pocket edition of Madame de Sevigné's letters. I walk through Montsouris Park, where late-flowering double jasmines are still blooming. I stop under the cedar of Lebanon, smell the resin, and dive into the underground world of the Metro. I meet ghosts there as well as people... (Õnnepalu 2000: 2)

The translator has divided the original sentence into 5 smaller segments that end with a full stop starting thus each new thought in a new sentence. The long sentence in ST slows down the pace of the narrative adding formality to the soliloquy, while the shorter sentences of the translation speed it up and change the reflective nature of the narrative. This, in turn, changes the reader's perception of the narrator's thought process and inner world. In the TT, the narrator's thoughts and actions seem more intentional, since the translator starts each sentence from the first-person point of view (*I walk, I stop, I meet*), which places the focus on the narrator's actions (beside that, the verb *walk* is repeated twice, stressing the importance of the activity). In the ST, on the other hand, the focus is more on Madame de Sevigné's letters, trees of the Montsouris Park and the Metro - the reader walks through the spaces together with the narrator, feeling almost as if part of the narration. This impression is further emphasised by the author's choice to use impersonal constructions formed by the use of gerund (*kõndides, seisatades, sukeldudes*), which is replaced by the first-person narrative in the translation. However, using first-person point of view, the translator creates a new kind of rhythm in the text, which is not apparent in the ST. Using the first-person narrative repeatedly in the TT imitates the rhythm of walking, which brings the reader closer to the narrator. On the other hand, using this tool decreases the distancing attitude used by the narrator in the ST.

In the following example the focus is shifted to narrator's actions in the English version:

Mõeldes tõesti kogu see aeg oma tunnistusele, mille ma andma pean, neile lõpuks paarile sõnale, mis mul öelda on oma elust inimesena, oma tühisest kuriteost maailmas... Kui ma ainult teaksin, kust alustada, mis siis viga oleks! Kas sellest, mis paistis kord ammu, läinud sajandil ühe paneelmaja esimese korruse korteri aknast, mida vanaema kunagi ei lubanud lahti teha? Või Amsterdamist, magusast ja kuritegelikust linnast? Või prügikastist, kuhu ma äsja viskasin ajalehe koos Franzi nimega, mis seal rasvaselt ära trükitud oli? Kas sellest, mis oli, või sellest, mis kestab, kui see ikka kestab, mis kestab, see peapööritus, see pimestus, see päikesepiste! Jah, päikesepiste, kui ma alustan huupi, siis ma alustangi päikesest, ma ihaldasin päikest, päikese järel käis mu himu. Ja oma himu järel käies olen ma siia välja jõudnud, sellesse linna, kuhu on kokku korjatud nii palju maailma ilu ja rikkust, kõiksugu päikeseande, niisamuti kui inetust, valu ja häda, mida kuld ja kalliskivid vaevalt jõuavad kinni katta. (Önnepalu 2015: 8-9)

Actually, I am constantly thinking about my testimony, because I will have to testify. I weigh the trifling words I have to say about myself as a human being, about my trivial crime in a world... If only I knew where to begin, then there would be no problem! Should I start with what I saw a long time ago, in that other century, through the first-floor window of that prefabricated apartment house, the window that Grandmother never allowed to be opened? Or with Amsterdam, that sweet, crime-ridden city? Or with the garbage bin that I threw the newspaper into, the one with Franz's name printed in big fat letters? Should I start with what was, or what is, if what is still is, this vertigo, this blindness, this blinding sunshine!

Yes, sunshine. If I am to start at random, then I'll start with sunshine. I yearned for sunshine. I had a passion for sun, and it was following this passion that brought me to this town where so much of the world's beauty and wealth is gathered, so many gifts of the sun, as well as ugliness, pain, and want, which even gold and jewels cannot hide. (Önnepalu 2000:2)

At the beginning of the second paragraph of this example, Önnepalu is using personal pronoun 'I' ('ma') and noun 'sun' ('päike') to create the rhythm for the sentence. "Jah, päikesepiste, kui ma alustan huupi, siis ma alustangi päikesest, ma ihaldasin päikest, päikese järel käis mu himu." The rhythm in this sentence is created by the repetition of the nouns 'ma' and 'päike'. The sentence is divided into five segments, which are separated by commas. At the beginning of the sentence the rhythm is not as obvious as it is at the end of the sentence, but it acts as an introduction to the rest of the sentence and its rhythm. The rhythm is more visible in the second part of the sentence. Second, third and fourth segments of the sentence are all following the same pattern, where the personal pronoun 'ma' acts as a subject at the beginning of the clause and the noun 'päike' acts as an object at the end of the clause. In the fifth segment the rhythm is disrupted by placing the noun 'päike' at the beginning of the clause and placing the inflected form of the word 'ma' at the end of the clause.

The translated version of this sentence is as follows: “Yes, sunshine. If I am to start at random, then I’ll start with sunshine. I yearned for sunshine. I had a passion for sun, and it was following this passion that brought me to this town where...”. There are some notable differences in this version of the sentence. The most obvious one of them is the changes in the punctuation. Instead of separating different clauses with commas like in the original version, the translator has used full stops instead. This causes the end of the clause to be more concrete and emphasises the rhythm of the excerpt. Just like in the source text, the rhythm is created by the repetition of the personal pronoun ‘I’ (‘ma’) and ‘sun/sunshine’ (‘päike/päikesepiste’).

Another thing to notice is that “päikesepiste” has been translated into English as “sunshine”. The correct equivalent here would be sunstroke. It is not clear whether the translator misread the original word or deliberately changed the word for some reason, but it seems to me that this might just be a misreading. Lack of sunshine in the narrator’s homeland seems to be one of the reasons why he decided to try his luck in a warmer and a brighter country. The narrator describes his relationship with the sun as follows: “So, it was to find sun that I came from “up North”, as they say here. I come from a country where the sun is as rare as a diamond, an incredible gold coin that is examined in the light and tested by biting before it’s accepted as genuine. (Önnepalu 2000: 4)” The narrator desired the sun like some people desire wealth and luxurious lifestyle. When the borders were opened after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many people from Eastern European countries decided to search for their happiness from the wealthy West. The same did the narrator of the *Border State*. But he was not chasing the riches of Old Europe (at least he claimed he was not), he was following the sun and, although he did not admit it, running away from himself. ‘Päikesepiste’ means ‘sunstroke’ in English. Sunstroke is a state in which a person is feeling unwell from being in the sunshine for too long. A person like this may not be in their right mind, in more severe cases they may even experience hallucinations. Sunshine, however, creates more positive associations in my

mind. In my opinion, this difference is important when I think of the upcoming events of the novel. The narrator loves to share his imaginations with the reader to the point that the reader starts doubting whether any of the events described in the novel actually took place or is it all just happening in the narrator's mind. The narrator appears to be in a sunstroke-like state throughout the novel, blinded by the luxury and the freedom of West Europe. In a way, the word 'päikesepiste' gives a hint to the reader about the mental state of the narrator. Such a state seems to be reflected also in the narrative style, the way sentences are constructed with no apparent beginning or end, in a constant flow.

The aforementioned example is closely followed by another one, where the meaning of the ST has slightly changed.

Niisiis: päikese järel käies tulin ma, "sealt ülevalt Põhjast", nagu siin öeldakse. Ma olen maalt, kus päike on haruldane teemant, uskumatu kuldmünt, mida uuritakse tule paistel ja katsutakse hambaga, enne kui tihatakse silma usaldada. Sügisel pannakse päike koos kartulite ja kaalidega koopasse varjule; ja kui ta kevadel sealt välja tuuakse, õue tuulduma, siis on tal valgete kartuliidude mürgine lõhn; seda lõhna on täis terve õu kuni metsani välja. (Õnnepalu 2015: 10)

So, it was to find sun that I came from "up North," as they say here. I come from a country where the sun is as rare as a diamond, an incredible gold coin that is examined in the light and tested by biting before it's accepted as genuine. In the autumn the sun is stashed with potatoes and rutabagas in cellars. When it's brought out in the spring to be aired in the yard, it has a poisonous odor, like that of white potato sprouts. That odor fills the yard all the way to the woods. (Õnnepalu 2000: 4)

In ST, the direct translation for the expression "päikese järel käies tulin ma" would be "following the sun I came". Instead, it was translated as "it was to find sun". This difference alters the meaning slightly, but probably not enough to change the reading experience for the English speaking reader. On the contrary, it seems as if the translator has made this choice deliberately to maintain the rhythm of the text. Therefore it can be claimed that the small alteration in the meaning has improved the reading experience compared to the direct translation.

The translator has also decided to translate "enne kui tihatakse silma usaldada" as "before it's accepted as genuine". The change here is completely justified and there is no other

option than to replace the phrase entirely. If the translator had used direct translation, the sentence would not have made any sense to the English reader.

This example does not have many changes made in regards to punctuation. Some commas have been removed from the first part of the paragraph, since the English language does not require a comma before a conjunction. However, the colon at the beginning of the novel has been replaced with a comma, which reduces the effect of connectedness of the ST. The colon after a conjunction is a somewhat unusual choice, although not grammatically incorrect. Colon implies that the next part of the sentence will be explanatory and connects the two parts of the sentence together. Using a comma instead of a colon equalises the parts of the sentence and although it still connects the two parts, the explanatory link between the two parts is weaker. In the second part of the extract, the semicolons have been replaced with full stops, which separates the different ideas from each other.

Discussion

Overall, the English version of *Piiririk* is very well translated. However, there are significant changes made in the punctuation of the TT, which alter the rhythm of the novel. The sentences are noticeably longer in the ST and consist of several clauses. It seems that the author has intentionally made this decision to create a constant flow of the text. In the TT, on the other hand, the sentences are considerably shorter, which breaks the flow and speeds up the narrative rhythm. This as well seems to be a deliberate choice of the translator. Shorter sentences have made both the reading and translating processes easier. To compensate for the changes made in the original rhythm of the text, the translator has created a new kind of rhythm. In one passage, for example, the translator has imitated the rhythm of walking by replacing the use of gerund with the first-person point of view. This, however, has shifted the focus of the sentence, bringing the reader closer to the narrator, but also decreasing the distancing attitude

of the ST. The differences in punctuation between the ST and TT are very noticeable and alter the rhythm, focus and speed of the narrative to a considerable extent. Nevertheless, the changes do not seem to be translation mistakes, but are well thought through by the translator to make the reading process easier and more natural for the English-speaking public.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to see how the changes in the punctuation in the English translation of *Piiririik* by Tõnu Õnnepalu have affected the narrative speed of the novel. The thesis begins with the introduction of Tõnu Õnnepalu as a writer, describes *Piiririik/Border State*, Õnnepalu's other novels, his writing style and introduces Madli Puhvel as a translator. Second part of the thesis compares *Piiririik* by Tõnu Õnnepalu to its English translation *Border State*.

In general, *Piiririik* is very well translated, although there are very noticeable differences in punctuation between the original and the translated text. For instance, the sentences in target text are considerably shorter than in the source text, which changes the rhythm of the text and shifts the focus in some of the sentences. The translator has probably made these changes intentionally to either maintain, emphasise or create a new kind of rhythm. In addition, dividing the long sentences into smaller fragments has significantly simplified both the translating process for the translator as well as the reading process for the reader, which was also probably one of the intentions of the translator. Although the changes between the source text and the target text are quite significant, altering the rhythm, narrative speed and even the focus in some of the sentences, there is a reason to believe that the differences are not translation mistakes but intentional alterations which simplify and improve the reading process.

Since the English translation of *Piiririik* has not been researched much, there is plenty of potential for future research. For a French-speaking researcher it would be interesting to see if and how the effect that the letters were originally written in French has been transferred to the English version of the novel. Another idea for research would be to see how the gender issue of the novel has changed during the process of translation. *Piiririik* is an intriguing and exceptional novel, which allows us to research it and its translations from many different angles.

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Resümee

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Helve Sökk

Changes in Narrative Speed and Rhythm in Tõnu Õnnepalu's *Piiririik* and its Translation *Border State*/Muutused narratiivi tempos Tõnu Õnnepalu "Piiririigis" ja selle tõlkes "Border State"

Bakalaureusetöö

2022

Lehekülgede arv: 27

Annotatsioon:

Käesoleva bakalaureusetöö eesmärgiks on uurida tõlkeprotsessi käigus toimunud muutusi narratiivi tempos ja rütmis Tõnu Õnnepalu romaanis "Piiririik" ja selle inglise keelses tõlkes "Border State". Töö esimene osa kirjeldab Tõnu Õnnepalu kirjanikuna, tema teoseid ning kirjutamisstiili. Samuti annab esimene osa ülevaate Madli Puhvelist kui tõlkijast. Töö teises osas antakse ülevaade uurimisprotsessiks vajalikest mõistetest ning kirjeldatakse uurimisprotsessi käiku. Teine osa sisaldab ka romaani ning selle tõlke võrdlust.

Bakalaureusetöö tulemusena selgus, et narratiivi tempo ja rütm on tõlkeprotsessi käigus märgatavalt muutunud. Mõnes lauses on muutunud ka fookus. Muutuste tulemusena on narratiivi tempo kiirenenud ja mõnes lauses on fookus pöördunud ümbritsevalt keskkonnalt peategelasele ning tema tegudele. Siiski võib arvata, et erinevused ei ole tõlkevead, vaid taotluslikult tehtud muutused, et lihtsustada inglise keelt kõnelevatele lugejatele tekstist arusaamist ning muuta romaani lugemine nauditavamaks.

Märksõnad:

Tõlkimine, narratiivi tempo, narratiivi rütm, Tõnu Õnnepalu

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