Abandoning the notion of “translation-inherent” explicitation. Against a dogma of translation studies

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The assumption that translations are “inherently” more explicit than (1.) their corresponding source texts and (2.) comparable, non-translated texts written in the target language has become a dogma of translation studies. This is largely due to the tremendous influence that Blum-Kulka’s (1986) Explicitation Hypothesis has exerted on the development of this young discipline. In my presentation, I am going to attack the widespread and often uncritically adopted assumption that “explicitation is a universal strategy inherent in the process of language mediation” (Blum-Kulka 1986: 21).

It will be shown that previous research on the Explicitation Hypothesis has suffered from severe theoretical and methodological problems that we need to avoid in the future if we want to find out what explicitation in translation is really about. Empirical data will be discussed which suggest that a more differentiated treatment of explication than that suggested by the Explicitation Hypothesis is in order.

References