

# Translation studies meets variationist linguistics (or, why translation studies needs multifactorial statistics): The *that*/zero alternation and increased explicitness in translation

**Haidee Kruger**

*Macquarie University*

A number of studies on explicitation in translation have used the optional complementiser *that* in English as an operationalisation of lexicogrammatical explicitness, and have demonstrated a preference for the non-elliptical structure in translated English texts. However, the causes of the explicitation process that results in the lexicogrammatically more explicit product remain a source of disagreement, with explanations ranging from cognitive strain or effort, pragmatic conservatism or risk avoidance, and source-language transfer or cross-linguistic priming effects (see, e.g. Becher 2010; Olohan & Baker 2000; Kruger 2019).

This paper focuses on these potential causes of the increased explicitness of translated language by investigating an aspect of the *that*/zero alternation that has remained largely conceptually and methodologically unexplored in translation studies (but see Kruger 2019; Kruger & De Sutter 2018): the fact that the choice between *that*/zero is probabilistically conditioned by a number of linguistic and contextual variables (Torres Cacoullos & Walker 2009; Tagliamonte & Smith 2005; Wulff et al. 2014). It demonstrates how state-of-the-art quantitative variationist methods may be used in translation studies, by presenting a corpus-based, multifactorial analysis of the factors conditioning the choice between the retention or omission of the complementiser in four register-controlled corpora: a corpus of English translated from Afrikaans, corpora of British and South African English, and a corpus of Afrikaans. Afrikaans also allows the omission of the equivalent complementiser *dat*, and demonstrates preferences for omission that are partially similar and partially distinct from English (Van Rooy & Kruger 2016).

Three influential methods in variationist linguistics are compared: random forests, conditional inference trees, and linear mixed effects modelling. The findings are used to reflect on potential psycholinguistic and pragmatic mechanisms underlying translational explicitation at the lexicogrammatical level, as well as to demonstrate the benefits of variationist linguistic methods and the necessity of multifactorial methods in translation studies.

## References

- Becher, Viktor. 2010. Abandoning the notion of "translation-inherent" explicitation: Against a dogma of translation studies. *Across Languages and Cultures*, 11(1): 1-28.
- Kruger, Haidee. 2019. *That* again: A multivariate analysis of the factors conditioning syntactic explicitness in translated English. *Across Languages and Cultures* 20(1): 1-33.
- Kruger, Haidee & De Sutter, Gert. 2018. Alternations in contact and non-contact varieties: Reconceptualising *that*-omission in translated and non-translated English using the MuPDAR approach. *Translation, Cognition and Behavior* 1(2): 251-290.
- Olohan, Maeve & Mona Baker. 2000. Reporting *that* in translated English: Evidence for subconscious processes of explicitation? *Across Languages and Cultures*, 1(2): 141-158.
- Tagliamonte, Sali A. & Jennifer Smith. 2005. No momentary fancy! The zero "complementizer" in English dialects. *English Language and Linguistics*, 9(2): 289-309.
- Torres Cacoullou, Rena & James A. Walker. 2009. On the persistence of grammar in discourse formulas: A variationist study of *that*. *Linguistics*, 47(1): 1-43.
- Van Rooy, Bertus & Haidee Kruger. 2016. Faktore wat die weglating van die Afrikaanse onderskikker dat bepaal [Factors that influence the omission of the Afrikaans complementizer dat 'that']. *Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe / Journal for Humanities* 56(1): 102-116.
- Wulff, Stefanie, Nicholas Lester & M<sup>a</sup>. Teresa Martínez García. 2014. *That*-variation in German and Spanish L2 English. *Language and Cognition* 6(2): 271-299.